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Divine origin of
Christianity

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THE
DIVINE ORIGIN
OF
CHRISTIANITY.

By J. G. PIKE,

AUTHOR OF "PERSUASIVES TO EARLY PIETY," "TRUE HAPPINESS," "GUIDE TO YOUNG DISCIPLES," "RELIGION AND ETERNAL LIFE," ETC. ETC.

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THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INQUIRY AS TO THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY.

1. THERE cannot be a more important question proposed than this:—"Is the religion of Christ from God, or is it a cunningly-devised fable?"

Many remarks might be offered to illustrate the overwhelming importance of this inquiry. The following deserve attention. Christianity has been acknowledged divine by the wisest, the greatest, and the most talented of mankind. This fact is not brought forward as an evidence of the Divine Origin of Christianity, but as a fact that shows the unreasonableness and folly of neglecting to investigate its evidences. Bacon, the father of modern philosophy, who has been represented as "the wisest and brightest of mankind," was a Christian. Newton, the most distinguished of philosophers, whose fame spreads through an admiring world, wrote in defence of Christianity. Locke, the deepest of thinkers, "whose office was to detect the errors of thinking, by going up to the fountain of thought, and to direct into the proper track of reasoning, the devious mind of man,"—Locke, thus qualified to judge of evidence, in his latter years studied little but the Bible. Milton, who

for exalted genius stands unequalled, who possessed a mind "rich with all that man ever knew," sung in those poems that will hand down his name to the last period of time, the hallowed themes of Christianity. Howard, the benevolent friend of the prisoner, of whom a poet, that was no Christian, writes:—

—————The spirits of the just,
When first arrayed in Virtue's purest robe,
They saw *her* Howard traversing the globe,
Mistook a mortal for an angel guest,
And ask'd what seraph foot the earth imprest.
Onward he moves; disease and death retire,
And murmuring demons hate him, and admire.

Howard was a Christian, and Christianity made him what he was. Washington, the patriot whom all admire, avowed himself a Christian. But the time would fail to tell of Johnson, and Addison, and Jones, and Boyle, and Hampden, and Russell, and of thousands more of the most intelligent and distinguished of mankind, in the different classes of society, who have investigated the claims of Christianity, and confessed its divinity. Is there not reason to think *that* religion may be true whose evidences such men have investigated, and whose truth and divinity they then acknowledged? Is there not reason to believe that those who treat it with indifference or hostility, really know nothing respecting its nature and its claims; or are unwilling to submit to its requirements? Is there not cause to think, they deserve a reproof similar to that given by Sir Isaac Newton to Dr. Halley:—"I am always glad to hear you when you speak about astronomy, or other parts of the mathematics, because that is a subject you have studied and well understand; but you should not talk of Christianity, for you have not studied it: *I have*; and am certain you know nothing of the matter."* Does it display wisdom or folly to

* Emlyn's Life.

treat with contempt or neglect what Bacon, and Milton, and Newton, and Locke, and Johnson, and Washington, revered and loved? Does it display wisdom, to profess to be wise, by scorning what the wisest and most distinguished of mankind have revered as the truest wisdom? Rather does not such a course display the self-conceit and ignorance of the most destructive folly?

2. Another consideration, illustrating the importance of the inquiry before us, is the nature of the Christian religion. Christianity challenges the attention of every reasonable being; and the most senseless creature in the universe is the person who refuses to consider its claims. Were there any reasonable doubt of its truth, which there is not, such is its nature, that it imperiously demands attention. If true, (and it is so,) it contains the most momentous truths we can possibly believe. All those truths, in discovering which the wisest of mankind have consumed their days, when weighed with it, are lighter than vanity. For if it is true, and should a careless unbeliever peruse this page, let him indulge the reflection, the God whom it discovers is that awful Being whom we must meet; the Saviour it proclaims is the Judge before whom we must appear; the judgment it foretells, is that at which our doom for eternity will be passed; the solemn scenes of the future world which it discloses, are scenes we shall behold; the endless life it has brought to light, is the life which we must live; and either the heaven or the hell which it discovers, must be our portion through all the joyful or dreadful periods of a boundless eternity. How important is inquiry respecting a religion that spreads its influence over a whole eternity! which, if true and embraced, leads to eternal

life ! which, if true and rejected, sinks him that rejects it to eternal damnation !

3. Let it be written upon your heart, that the Gospel is every thing or nothing at all. If false, it were nothing ; if true, it is every thing. Nor is the question between this and some other system almost equal to it. It is this, or none. If this be not divine, none is ; if this do not guide you, there is none to guide ; if this do not comfort, there is none to comfort you ; if this do not truly display a Saviour, there is no Saviour for you ; if this do not truly reveal a happier world, there is none to reveal it. Without Christianity you may know you have a Maker ; his eternal power and Godhead appear in his works ; but you know you are guilty, and if the Gospel be not divine, how that then unknown Maker may treat the guilty you know not, and cannot know. He may frown you into nothing ; you may die with beasts ; or, without the possibility of escape, burn with demons, for aught you know, or ever can know, unless you may learn it from the Bible. If Christianity were false, you are a creature without a guide, a sinner without a Saviour ; whose past life is full of guilt, and whose future prospect is full of doubt, and anxiety, and fear.

A deist, who suffered death for high-treason, not many years ago, observed to a fellow-sufferer, just before his execution, that in a few minutes they should know the grand secret ; a tacit confession that “ shadows, clouds, and darkness,” rest upon the future, in the case of those who reject the Gospel ; that without it, nothing respecting eternity can be known. How awful is such a condition to enter eternity !

The late learned Mr. Jacob Bryant relates a circumstance that may enforce these remarks. “ When I was in camp with the duke of Marlborough, an officer of

my acquaintance desired me, upon my making a short excursion, to take him with me in my carriage. Our conversation was rather desultory, as is usual upon such occasions; and among other things, he asked me rather abruptly, what were my notions about religion. I answered evasively, or at least indeterminately, as his inquiry seemed to proceed merely from an idle curiosity; and I did not see that any happy consequences could ensue from an explanation. However, some time afterwards he made a visit at my house, and stayed with me a few days. During this interval, one evening he put the question to me again; and at the same time added, that he should be really obliged if I would give him my thoughts in general upon the subject. Upon this I turned towards him, and after a short pause told him, that my opinion lay in a small compass; and he should have it in as compendious a manner as the subject would permit. Religion, I said, is either true or false. This is the alternative: there is no medium. If it be the latter—merely an idle system, and a cunningly devised fable, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. The world is before us, let us take all due advantage, and choose what may seem best; for we have no prospect of any life to come; much less any assurance. But if religion be a truth, it is the most serious truth of any with which we can possibly be engaged; an article of the greatest importance. It demands our most diligent inquiry to obtain a knowledge of it; and a fixed resolution to abide by it, when obtained. For religion teaches us, that this life bears no proportion to the life to come. You see, then, my good friend, that an alternative of the utmost consequence lies before you. Make, therefore, your election as you may judge best; and Heaven direct you in your determination! He told me that he was much

afflicted with the crisis to which I had brought the object of inquiry ; and I trust that it was attended with happy consequences afterwards."

4. In the manner in which Christianity professes to have been revealed to mankind, there is something so unspeakably grand as to claim the most devout attention. If an angel clothed in celestial glory were to appear upon earth, and to proclaim to all the inhabitants of the world, that he came to bring them a message from the Almighty, hardened as men are in sin, could they refuse to listen such a messenger? But if Christianity is true, that was published by a messenger inexpressibly more awful. No mighty angel, but He from whom all the angelic hosts derive their being and their bliss, appeared as the messenger of his Father's love. Not indeed glowing in the splendours of heaven, but displaying the power and knowledge of a God ; and letting some beams of his divine glory shine through the veil of mortal clay. He whose hand stretched forth the firmament, and formed the solid world, is represented in scripture as having in our nature hungered, and thirsted, and wept, and bled, and groaned, and died for man ! What are all wonders to this wonder ! What all that astounds the human mind, and overpowers its faculties, to this far more astonishing, but most delightful fact !—God incarnate for miserable man ! the King of kings a servant ! the Lord of angels a man of woe ! the Holy One, in whom the Father delighted, frowned on by him, because loaded with the guilt of millions ! the Giver of life to innumerable multitudes, a victim to death, and a tenant of the grave ! Here what countless wonders meet !

5. To these remarks may be added, that another consideration, showing the importance of the present question, arises from the fact, that almost innumerable

multitudes have laid down their lives for the sake of religion. Though some deride the Gospel, and more neglect it, yet multitudes as sensible as they of earthly comforts, and as ready to enjoy them, have shed their heart's blood for it; and doubtless, were the call now made, thousands more would show the same Christian courage; would again throng the bleeding way to heaven; and once more prove to a deluded world that religion is better than life. If a hundred men were sent to Newgate, then tried, condemned, and executed for resolutely maintaining some fact, which, if true, would be not more astonishing than important to all mankind, would not the inquiry from one end of the country to the other be, What was it for which those men suffered? How deserving then of attention is that religion, for which not a hundred only, but thousands, and literally millions, have forsaken kindred, and country, and friends, and life! O think, it is not for a fable that myriads have bled! it is not for a fable that myriads would bleed! O hear those martyred millions as it were calling on you from their tombs, and bidding you attend! The voice of their sufferings, the cry of their blood, poured on the earth like water, is, that the religion of the Gospel is the one thing needful.

6. Before we pass on to view some parts of the direct evidence that supports the claims of Christianity, it may not be improper to remark, that the situation of infidels is such as naturally prompts them to determined hostility, and leads them to cherish the desire of proselyting others to their ruinous unbelief. If Christianity is true, not the slightest glimpse of hope remains for those who continue to be its opposers. As sure as they exist, perdition must be their portion, Mark xvi. 16; John iii. 36. If Christianity prove true,

their wickedness must hereafter appear unutterably great, in rejecting a Saviour so glorious, so benevolent, possessed of so many claims upon their hearts, and exhibiting to view such divine compassion. Hence, on the supposition of its truth, they resemble subjects engaged in rebellion against a lawful and benevolent sovereign, who invites submission, with promises of mercy and favour; but who declares, that if rebellion be continued, to all that are taken in arms, no quarter can possibly be given, or mercy shown. In such a case, those who *would* still be rebels would rush into determined hostility. If Christianity is divine, in such a hopeless situation does every one stand, to whose view its claims are presented, but who rejects or slights those claims.

Hence, too, will spring an anxiety for making proselytes. When a person sets himself to oppose a subject of general belief among the wisest and the greatest, fear that he may be mistaken will, though unacknowledged, at times steal into the breast; and to an infidel, the least possibility, much more probability, of the truth of Christianity, must be dreadful. But every convert to infidelity tends to prop up his hopes that Christianity may prove a fable, and that the dreadful judgment it announces is delusion. Mr. Cecil was once an infidel. He remarks, "I was a professed infidel, but then I liked to be an infidel in company rather than alone. I was wretched when by myself. These principles, maxims, and data (those of Christianity) spoiled my jollity. With my companions I could sometimes stifle them: like embers we kept one another warm." Young reader, are you tempted to infidelity? Do companions laugh at your regard to Christianity, and invite you with them to throw off its restraints? O pause! If you become an infidel in

company, can you be one alone? Can you be one on the bed of sickness? Can you be one at the gates of death, and on the verge of eternity? If you can be one when you spend an hour alone, can you be one when you die alone, and when you go alone to meet your God? Are you tempted to be an infidel? O pause! Think of the awful predicament to which you would reduce yourself. You must either prove *that* false which the greatest and wisest of men have examined and acknowledged to be divine, or you must perish for ever. You must either demonstrate that religion false which has stood unhurt amidst the attacks of heathens, Jews, and infidels, for eighteen hundred years, or you must sink to ruin under the horrid guilt of being the wicked opponent of all that is Godlike and divine. You must prove that for which millions have bled as martyrs to be a fable, or you must be condemned by Him whose grace and terror, if true, it reveals. Prove it false, and you have nothing to dread from its Author; but if you cannot accomplish this hard task, you must live, and you must die, as the determined foe of the God of the Gospel, laden with guilt too great for description to reach, and deserving of ruin too dreadful for imagination to paint. O pause! pause! when this is the awful alternative.

CHAPTER II.

CHRISTIANITY PROVED TO BE FROM GOD, BY THE MIRACLES WHICH WERE WROUGHT IN ATTESTATION OF ITS DIVINE ORIGIN.

I. ONE of those powerful proofs which attest that the Gospel is from God, is found in the miracles that were wrought by the Lord Jesus and his apostles. It

is surely needless to argue, that miracles like theirs, are a sufficient proof of the divinity of any system they attest. Were you to see a person professing to be a messenger from God, give sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, hearing to the deaf, life to the dead, could you doubt for one moment whether his professions were true? It is true, the juggling tricks of some impostors may appear strange and unaccountable to persons unacquainted with their delusive arts, but impostors never restored the dead to life. The miracles ascribed to our Lord and his disciples were of such a nature that there could be no imposition in them. He cured the sick by a word, even where the diseases were most obstinate, as leprosy and palsy. At his command the blind received sight, the lame walked, the deaf heard, the dumb spake, the maimed (those who had lost a limb) had their limbs restored, and even the dead arose. He walked on the sea; the winds and waves hearkened to his voice, and tempests grew still at his bidding. He exerted creating power when five loaves and a few small fishes fed above five thousand persons. The miracles of his apostles were equally great. Diseases fled at their word, and the dead came back to life.* Miracles like these admit of no deception. If we saw a person stretched lifeless in a coffin, no juggling tricks of an impostor could persuade us that he had called the departed spirit back to its feeble tabernacle, and restored the dead to a second life. If we saw another lingering on a sick bed, burnt with fever, or motionless with palsy, nothing could convince us that he was restored to health, unless he really were so. If we beheld a street crowded with persons bearing the sick on beds and couches,

* I conceive it needless to refer to the particular miracles alluded to, the reader cannot peruse the New Testament attentively without noticing them.

that they might get them healed by the word of another, and then saw those persons walking back to their homes in perfect health, we should certainly exclaim, "There is no imposition here!" If we were walking down another street, and beheld the sick laid along its sides on their couches of affliction, that the shadow of a man passing down it might overshadow some of them, and then beheld these rising from their beds of suffering in sudden health and vigour, what could we say, but, "This is not delusion!" If the dumb suddenly spake to us, if the blind looked on us, and the deaf heard our voice, we still must acknowledge "There is no imposition here!" Such were the miracles of the Lord and his apostles.

Infidels may ask, Where is your proof that these miracles were wrought? Are you not, though not deluded by juggling tricks, deceived by narratives of what never happened? We confidently answer, No: we have proof, abundant proof, that these miracles were wrought, in the constrained silence of our Lord's enemies; in the acknowledgments of some of those enemies; and in the testimonies of his suffering friends.

2. The opponents of Christianity frequently attempt to confound the miracles of its founder and his apostles, with the pretended miracles of the Roman church, or of some wild sects in later ages. Probably, some unbelievers are unhappy enough to be so prejudiced and ignorant, as not to perceive the wide distinction which exists between them; while others are so wicked and ungenerous as to endeavour to represent the former as destitute of any better evidence than the latter. Our opponents will tell us, that various systems of acknowledged superstition have had miracles urged in their support. The wide difference between these pretended miracles and those of Christianity,

has been demonstrated in a way which infidelity can never refute, by Leslie, Douglas, and Paley. They have proposed various tests by which to try the accounts of miracles. The miracles of Christianity will bear the trial proposed, but none will bear it besides. The following may be represented as the most important of these tests of examination. To evidence a miracle to be genuine, the account of it should be published soon after the miracle occurred—it should be published in the neighbourhood where the miracle was wrought—it should be published in such circumstances as to secure an examination of the fact related. These rules must commend themselves to any reasonable mind. Tried by them, the miracles of popery and of paganism cannot stand. Some of them have been published long after the time when the fact related is said to have taken place, and when all opportunity of examination had long since ceased. Other accounts have been first promulgated in distant countries, while no evidence existed that any knowledge of such facts was to be found in the country where they were said to have occurred. Many are stated to have taken place where no opportunity existed for examining their truth or falsehood—where they were credulously believed by superstitious and deluded men—where no enemy was found to investigate their claims, or where a hint of imposture would have been deemed an unpardonable heresy. Other narratives have been wonderful tales, in which no one was peculiarly interested, but as far as human welfare was concerned, it was a matter of perfect indifference whether they were received or rejected. How different to all these were the miracles of Christianity. The accounts respecting them were published on the spot—they were published soon after the crucifixion of our Saviour, and

while miracles by the hands of the apostles were taking place—they were published in the midst of enemies—they specify places in which miracles occurred, and gave every opportunity for full investigation, while, instead of its being a matter of little moment whether they were received or rejected, the dearest interests of multitudes were connected with the decision.

3. Under these circumstances, a powerful proof in confirmation of the truth of the statements of the miracles of our Lord and his disciples, arises from the constrained silence of their enemies. The most effectual blow which they could have given to Christianity, would have been to prove, that the accounts respecting these miracles were false, and that they were never wrought. Modern infidels perceive this, and therefore try now to disprove what their predecessors in unbelief did not dare deny. Yet if these miracles had not been true, our Lord's enemies had every advantage for proving them false. They were not huddled up in the dark, like the tricks of popery, but were wrought in the most public manner, in the principal towns and cities of various countries, before enemies, and sometimes even in the midst of angry enemies; were performed in various instances on objects well known to have been disordered, and were exposed to the most rigid scrutiny of those whose interest it was to prove them false. Had all these miracles been confined to one obscure town or village, there might have been cause to suspect imposture. But the Lord's miracles were wrought in Jerusalem, in Capernaum, and in other places which are expressly specified; and those of the apostles in places hundreds of miles apart. Thus in the book of Acts we read of miracles wrought in various towns and cities of Judea; the Lesser Asia; Greece, including Macedonia; and in the Grecian

Islands ; thus exposed to the scrutiny of thousands who hated Christianity, how can we account for their silence in not proving imposture, but, from the fact, they knew they could not prove it ? Let us imagine a case something similar to that in which we are now viewing the Lord and his apostles.

4. Suppose that some ancient prophecies had led our countrymen to expect that some one should arise who should prove their greatest benefactor ; that about the appointed time, a person did appear professing to be the man they expected ; that he had spent a few years teaching, and professing to work miracles ; but that the government and people disliking him, he had been put to death. Suppose after this that some of his disciples had travelled through the British islands, professing also to work miracles, and that they had also gone through France, Spain, Italy, and Germany, making the same professions. Suppose that then some of these persons were to write an account of the life of their founder ; and of the travels of his disciples, in which they ascribed miracles to them. If they said all these miracles were wrought in some obscure village in the highlands of Scotland, or in a valley among the Alps, the reader might suspect the truth of the account ; but if, instead of this, they stated that these miracles were wrought in the most public places, before even angry enemies, who wished to prove them false, and could not, must not the reader then allow them to be miracles of a truth ? Suppose it were stated that he had restored to life the daughter of the lord mayor of London ; that he had raised from the edge of the grave the son of the governor of Dover castle ; that in different churches in Bristol he had healed several diseased persons ; that going into Canterbury he had met a funeral, and called the dead out of the coffin ; that at Is-

lington, in the sight of friends and enemies, he had ordered another dead man out of his grave ; that upon this the privy-council had met, and determined that it were needful to destroy him, and that even the king himself had said, " It is expedient that one man should die for the people." Suppose further, that the history stated, that, when officers were sent to apprehend him, struck by an invisible power, they went backward, and fell to the ground ; that one of them having his ear cut off, their prisoner had touched his ear and healed him. Suppose further, that it were stated, that he had suffered on Tower-hill ; and that when he suffered, all nature seemed convulsed ; that darkness at noon covered London ; that various graves were opened ; that rocks rent ; and that the walls of St. Paul's church were split in two from the top to the bottom. Suppose further, that the history stated, that this man had said he should rise from the dead ; and that the government sealed up his tomb, and set sixty soldiers to watch it, but that nevertheless he had risen ; that his enemies said his disciples had stolen his body ; that in a few days one of those disciples healed a cripple who had sat as a beggar for years at the gates of St. Paul's cathedral ; and that he, and some fellow-disciples, for preaching in their master's name, were brought before the privy-council ; that these men, undaunted, charged the king and council, with having murdered their master, and declared to them, that, instead of the account published by them being true, that his body was stolen, God had raised him from the dead ; that the council, instead of charging them with falsehood and imposture, had tamely sunk under the charge exhibited against themselves, and let these men go ; suppose that the object of these men were such, that it would overthrow the whole ecclesiastical establishment ; and would deprive those who were supported

by it of their influence, wealth, and power ; and that they were rapidly proselyting multitudes ; suppose that the government hated these men ; and occasionally put one and other of them to death, but never tried to disprove honourably and openly the truth of their history ; would not this silence of theirs be almost proof enough that the history were true ? Would not every reasonable man say, If it be false, why do they not show it to be so ? it may be easily done. Was that child raised from death in London ? and that from the bed of death at Dover ? Was the man raised at Islington ? Did they examine into this before the privy-council ? if they did, and found it false, why do not they say so, instead of letting those men proselyte their thousands ?

Apply this mode of reasoning to the case of our Lord and his apostles. If the accounts of their miracles were not true, why did not their enemies prove their statements false ? His friends, passing over many other instances, record that he healed persons in various synagogues ; that at Capernaum he raised from the dead the daughter of Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue ; and there restored from the edge of the grave the servant of a centurion ; that entering Nain he raised to life a dead man whose funeral he met ; that he fed five thousand men at one time, and four thousand at another, with a few loaves and small fishes ; that at the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem, he raised to health a man diseased thirty-eight years ; and cured in the same city one that was born blind ; that in the neighbouring village of Bethany, he raised Lazarus from the grave ; that the Jews called a council, and the high-priest spoke of it as expedient, innocent as he was, to put him to death ; that when officers went to apprehend him, at his word they went backwards and fell to the ground ; that when apprehended he

healed the servant whose ear Peter cut off; that when he was crucified darkness covered the land; that the rocks rent; that the graves opened; that the dead arose; and that the vail of that boasted and valued temple, which his enemies had under their own keeping, was rent in twain. The second history adds, that after his resurrection, his powerful enemies spread a report that the disciples had stolen his body; that one of those disciples, having restored a man lame from his birth, was with his companion, apprehended, imprisoned, and brought before the supreme council; that there the disciples charged the council with having murdered the Lord of Life, and declared, that God had raised him from the dead; that they tamely in effect submitted to the charge, and thus, by their silence, in fact, confessed the falsehood of the report which they had invented. The history also states that speedily after this the apostles were imprisoned; and were to be brought again before the council and senate of Israel the next morning, but that when the morning came, the officers found the prison fast and the keepers watching the doors, but all the apostles gone; that they found them in the temple teaching the people; and that when the chief priests and other principal men among the Jews heard these things they doubted what would be the issue. Christianity was so opposed to the corrupt practices of the Jewish priests and rulers, that their wealth, their honour, and their influence were at stake; why then, except because they could not, did they not prove these statements false? and hand that proof down to their posterity. Why did they not say and prove, Your history is false; your Jesus never cured any person in our synagogues; he raised no daughter of Jairus; he cured no centurion's servant at Capernaum; he raised

no widow's son at the entrance of Nain; he never fed thousands with a few loaves and fishes; he cured no diseased man at the pool of Bethesda; nor did he in Jerusalem give sight to a man born blind; nor did the Pharisees hold any consultation on such a case; he did not raise Lazarus at Bethany; we held no council on the subject; nor did Caiaphas utter any sentiment so opposed to our law and his office, as that an innocent man might be put to death for public good. It is true, your Jesus was put to death, but the officers sent to apprehend him did not in a body go backwards and fall to the ground, when, after their declaration that they sought Jesus of Nazareth, he said, "I am he;" he did not heal the ear of the high-priest's servant; nor did darkness cover the land when he was crucified; nor did the rocks rend; nor was the vail of the temple rent in twain; nor did Peter restore a lame beggar at the gate of the temple; nor did the disciples charge us with having murdered him, and we silently submit to the charge; nor did they declare to us that God had raised him, and our silence allow the fact; nor did we imprison the disciples, and our officers the next morning find the keepers watching an empty prison, and the prisoners they thought they were guarding preaching in the temple: your history is false. Had they tried to give such an answer as this, they had come to the point; they had acted like men: but they did not give it; and the only rational supposition is, because they could not. Had the persons referred to in these statements been obscure individuals, their silence would have been inexplicable on any ground except their inability to offer a reply; but let it never be forgotten that in the case before us the governors of the Jewish nation were partly the actors. They hated the apostles, they pursued some

of them to death; thus they evinced their wish to crush the rising religion; but they stood not forward and boldly maintained—these statements are false. They evidently dared not bring the matter to this issue.

5. Proof to the authenticity and divinity of the Gospel may also be adduced from the testimony of its enemies. The Jews, instead of disproving the Saviour's miracles, charged him with learning magical arts in Egypt. In the Gemara it is said, "Did not the son of Stada" (a name they applied to Jesus) "bring magical arts out of Egypt in a cutting in his flesh?"* In the Jerusalem Talmud it is said, that a child who had swallowed poison was healed when a man came and pronounced some words in the name of Jesus; but that a rabbi, his grandfather, preferred his dying to his being thus healed. Elsewhere in Jewish writings it is said, that by virtue of the name Shem Hamephorash, which he stole out of the temple, he raised the dead, and walked upon the waters, and cured the lame, and cleansed the lepers.†

Tertullian appeals to the Jews themselves on their not denying the miracles of Christ; an appeal which it would have been madness to make if he knew that the fact of the case was exactly contrary. "Ye do not," says he, "disallow the mighty works done by Christ, for you yourselves said it was not for his works that ye stoned him, but because he did these things on the sabbath-day."

The testimonies of heathens are more numerous. Suetonius, writing of Nero, whose reign ended in A. D. 68, says, "The Christians were punished, a sort of men of a new and magical superstition." Celsus, a heathen philosopher, and bitter enemy to the gospel, wrote a book against Christianity in the second century. He

* Lardner's Jewish Testimonies, cap. 5. † Raymondi Pugo Fidci, p. 290.

wrote early, as he says. "It is but a few years since he" (Jesus) "delivered this doctrine, who is now reckoned by the Christians to be the Son of God." Respecting his testimony, Bryant says, "Many of the principal passages in the evangelists and apostles, as well as in the Old Testament, are either quoted, or alluded to, by him. He speaks of Moses and the creation; and refers often to the prophets. He speaks also of Christ and his incarnation; and of his being born of a virgin; and mentions his flight into Egypt. He acknowledges, that his disciples looked upon him as a divine personage, and accordingly worshipped him as the Son of God. He alludes frequently to the Holy Spirit; and mentions God under the title of the Most High; and speaks collectively of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as transmitted by the evangelists. He does not deny the miracles of Christ nor of his apostles; but attributes them to magic. Lastly, the crucifixion of our Saviour, his death, resurrection, and his appearing to his disciples afterwards, together with the darkness, and earthquake, at his decease, are mentioned by him. It is true, he continually objects and disbelieves. But those very objections prove, that these histories and doctrines existed, and must necessarily have been antecedent to his cavils, which is all that we want to know from him."*

Doddridge, referring to the testimony of Celsus, observes, that an enumeration of the particulars in the life of Christ referred to by him, would almost form an abridgement of the evangelists' history. Among other facts, Celsus refers to the following: he says, "that Jesus, who was represented as the Word of God, and who was the author of the Christian name, and also

* See Bryant on the authenticity of scripture, with references to the passages quoted from Celsus.

called himself the Son of God, was a man of Nazareth ; that he was the reputed son of a carpenter ; that when he was born, a star appeared in the east to certain magii, who came to adore him ? the consequence of which was the slaughter of the infants by Herod." He calls Christ himself a carpenter, and reproaches his mean life, and his gathering up ten or twelve poor men, publicans and men that used the sea. He grants that Christ wrought miracles, and particularly that he cured some sick people ; raised some that were dead, and multiplied some loaves ; but speaks of others doing the like. He also expressly mentions his curing the lame and the blind ; and his raising the dead is mentioned a second time. He speaks of Jesus as betrayed by his disciples and forsaken, as ignominiously bound, as scourged, as crowned with thorns, with a reed in his hand, and arrayed in a scarlet robe, and as condemned ; as having gall given him to drink when he was led away to punishment ; as shamefully treated in the sight of the world ; as distended on the cross. He derides Christ for not exerting his divinity to punish those outrages ; as taking no vengeance on his enemies ; as incapable to deliver himself, and not delivered by his Father in his extremity. He also insults Jesus for suffering, and yet praying, O Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away. After mentioning many other circumstances of the evangelic history to which this early opponent of the Gospel refers, Doddridge adds, "Upon the whole, there are in Celsus about *eighty* quotations from the book of the New Testament, or references to them, of which Origen has taken notice. And while he argues from them, sometimes in a very perverse and malicious manner, he still takes it for granted, as the foundation of his argument, that whatever absurdities could be fastened

upon any words or actions of Christ recorded in the Evangelists, it would be a valid objection against Christianity; thereby, in effect, assuring us not only that such a book did really exist, but that it was universally received by Christians in those times as credible and divine.”*

His attributing our Lord's miracles to magic, must be more minutely noticed. In one place he says, that Jesus served in Egypt, “and having there learned some charms, such as the Egyptians are fond of, he returned home; and then valuing himself upon those charms (powers,) he set up himself for a god.” Elsewhere he represents that Christians assigned as one reason for their believing that Christ was “the Son of God, because he cured the halt and the blind;” nor does he deny the fact.

Origen says, “Celsus, well knowing what great works may be alleged to have been done by Jesus, pretends to grant that the things related of him are true, such as healing diseases, raising the dead, feeding multitudes with a few loaves, of which, likewise, large fragments were left, and whatever other things the disciples, who, *as he thinks*, delighted in strange things, have written; and then adds ‘Well, then, let us grant that all these things were done by you.’” After this, he mentions the tricks of some impostors, and asks, “Because they do such things, must we therefore esteem them to be God's sons? or must we not rather say, that these are artifices of wicked and miserable men?” Celsus here allows that the works ascribed to Christ were as apparently done by him as the tricks of impostors are done by them. He thus admits the accounts of the Lord's miracles; the question therefore is, could magical arts heal the sick, give

* Doddridge in Lardner, article Celsus.

sight to the blind, and life to the dead? or was it possible for miracles so publicly wrought, to be the tricks of impostors? On this subject, Origen observes, "Celsus not being able directly to deny the great works which Jesus is recorded to have done, asperses them, and calls them juggling tricks."*—"You see that Celsus in a manner allows that there is such a thing as magic; though possibly he is the same who wrote several books against magic."—Alluding to the Christians, Celsus says, they seem to prevail by the name and invocation of certain demons.†

Porphyry, another virulent writer against Christianity, speaks of those as foolish who followed Jesus at his call. He is charged with representing the apostles as deceivers, but appears to have been ready to allow that they wrought signs, but pleads that others had done so by magical arts. Indeed, the imputation that the miracles of the Lord and his apostles were wrought by magic, appears to have been a common excuse for rejecting the divine religion to which they afforded such overwhelming evidence; and this was a refuge to which unbelief could flee to shroud the unhappy soul in continued darkness. Arnobius, a later Christian apologist, refers to this subject, and indignantly exclaims, "Were these works therefore the delusions of demons, and the tricks of magic arts? Are you able to point to any one, to show from all magicians, one who ever in the course of ages did any thing approaching by the thousandth part to the works of Christ?"

Julian the apostate was born in the year 331, and died in 363. He is another of those bitter enemies of the Gospel, who have yet allowed the reality of the miracles which confirm its truth. He was brought up as a Christian, and was ordained reader in the

* Lardner's Testimonies, article Celsus.

† Ibid. Porphyry.

church at Nicodemia. He had thus an opportunity of becoming thoroughly acquainted with the Christian system. He afterwards embraced paganism, and manifested by persecution, and in other ways, his utter hatred of Christianity. His situation in life, as head of the Roman empire, gave him the most favourable opportunity, if any imposition had been practised in the establishment of Christianity, for detecting the whole, and his hatred to the Christians and their religion, would doubtless have led him to do so; yet he did not. He wrote against Christianity. He patronized the Jews; and attempted to rebuild their temple, probably with the design of proving false the Saviour's prophecy, that Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles, &c. A heathen writer states, that this attempt was defeated by balls of fire, which, bursting out from the foundations, scorched and burnt the workmen. Referring to the Lord Jesus, he writes, "Jesus, whom you celebrate, was one of Cæsar's subjects.—After he was born, what good did he do to his relations?—Jesus, who *rebuked the winds, and walked on the sea, and cast out demons*, and, as you will have it, made the heaven and earth, (though none of his disciples presumed to say this of him except John only, nor he clearly and distinctly; however, let it be allowed that he said so,) could not order his designs so as to save his friends and relations."—"Jesus having persuaded a few among you, and those the worst of men, has now been celebrated about three hundred years, having done nothing in his life-time worthy of remembrance; unless any one thinks it a mighty matter to heal lame and blind people, and exorcise demons in the villages of Bethsaida and Bethany." Julian, in different passages, further acknowledges the genuineness and authority of many books of the New

Testament; the writings of Paul, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, all of which he mentions by name. He acknowledges that these books contain the doctrines of Christ's apostles. He refers to the first three Gospels as written before the martyrdom of Peter and Paul, and mentions John as writing after their death; he acknowledges the early and rapid progress of Christianity, and as may be observed, he mentions Jesus as having been celebrated for about three hundred years. He charges the Christians with having departed from the instructions of the apostles. "You are so unhappy as not to adhere to the things delivered to you by the apostles.—Jesus nowhere directed you to do such things, nor yet Paul." He expressly mentions the conversion of Cornelius and Sergius Paulus. In an edict to Christians, he speaks of them as those who worshipped Jesus, and esteemed him God the Word.* Referring to the apostle Paul, he says, that he exceeded every way all the cheats and jugglers which ever were.†

6. Observe now, what powerful attestation these testimonies of heathen writers furnish to the truth of the Christian miracles. Had the Jews been able to furnish evidence that the miracles ascribed to Jesus and his apostles were not wrought, these writers would gladly have seized it, and handed it down to posterity. They might then have triumphed over Christians, as wicked impostors, who were attempting to establish even religion by notorious falsehoods; but, instead of that, they ascribe these wonders to magical arts. Celsus, who probably had seen some of the disciples of the apostles, grants the miracles. Porphyry does not deny them. Julian, with the power

* Lardner's Jewish and Heathen Test. art. Julian.

† Apud Cyril Alex. b. iii. p. 100.

and wealth of the Roman empire at his command, to hunt out imposture if there were any, while he unfairly represents the character of Jesus, allows that he did works which cannot be done by human power, and which common sense tells us, cannot be effected by magical arts. Let the enlightened philosophers, as they are pleased to term themselves, of modern times, consider the testimonies of their friends, Julian and Celsus. Let them inform us how Jesus, if not divine, rebuked the winds, walked on the waves, cured demoniacs, restored sight to the blind, and vigour to the lame, and thus wrought the wonders which Julian acknowledges. Let them consider that Celsus too, that most bitter enemy of the Gospel, who lived just after the time when it was first published to the world, does not disprove the miracles of its first preachers. Had he been able to prove these but the pretences of impostors, would he not have done so? He says, indeed, "I could say many things concerning the affairs of Jesus, and those too different from those written by the disciples of Jesus, *but I purposely omit them.*" But would he have declined bringing forward these different statements if he could have produced any having the least plausibility or appearance of truth? Would the true heir to an estate, of which an impostor sought to deprive him, neglect the downright proof that his opponent was an impostor, and quibble about trifles? Would Celsus, the bitter opponent of Christianity, and zealous defender of paganism, if he could have proved miracles false, have neglected bringing forward that proof? One proof of this kind would have done more to check Christianity than the whole volume which he wrote against it. The miracles of the apostles doubtless, under God, contributed to make vast numbers their converts; how

could man resist such evidence as that offered to his senses, when the blind saw, and the tongue of the deaf sang, when the lame leaped for joy, and diseases and death fled at a word! Had Celsus proved these miracles imposition, he had done every thing he could desire; but he could not do this, and therefore attributed them to magical powers. Our modern philosophers disbelieve, and deny the efficacy of magic. How then can they free themselves from the dilemma into which their friend Celsus has brought them? If they deny that Jesus and his apostles wrought miracles, let them remember that they maintain what none but infidels, those enlightened sons of reason, can believe; what all besides must think truly absurd; that the most inveterate enemies of Christianity, when labouring for its subversion, and destroying its professors, by their unbroken silence gave their sanction to the publication of a long tissue of falsehoods by which it was supported; or by ascribing miracles to magical arts; united with the suffering friends of the Gospel in its support; that the persecutor and the martyr joined in the common deception, the first allowing, the last affirming the miracles of Jesus. They may say Celsus was deceived; and are they nearly seven-hundred years afterwards to undeceive him? They may assert the same of Julian; but if he, an apostate Christian, acquainted with all the secrets of Christianity, and raised to be emperor of the world, could detect no imposture, NOR DISPROVE ONE MIRACLE, are they, fifteen hundred years afterwards, to deny what he acknowledged? If these talented enemies of the Gospel, with the best means of investigation, so near the rise of the Christian religion, were compelled to allow the truth of its miracles, can they, eighteen hundred years afterwards, be supposed to gain so

much better a knowledge of what then occurred as to prove that false which their predecessors in unbelief were obliged to grant, and to pass over as impregnable to all their attacks? The supposition is absurd.

On reviewing this subject, it may lead us to observe how admirable is the wisdom of God in thus ordaining that the bitterest enemies of Christianity should be compelled to appear as witnesses in its behalf; and how vain are the efforts of its enemies, when those volumes, which, in one age they wrote to prove it false, in another, become invaluable evidences of its truth! Thus are the weapons of its enemies turned against themselves, and their swords pierce no bosoms but their own. This is evidently the case, while the writings of the early opposers of the Gospel unite with those of its friends to support what they attempted to destroy. All their attacks have tended to stamp their cause and themselves with shame. For about eighteen hundred years have the powers of hell united to destroy Christianity; and for about eighteen hundred years have its friends smiled at their feeble efforts, or rode securely through the storms their malice has raised. They have written against it, and their writings now appear in its support; they have martyred myriads of its friends, and rendered those martyred myriads witnesses to its truth.

7. The miracles of the Lord Jesus and his apostles are thus attested by the silence of their enemies, who had every advantage for disproving them, if they had not incontrovertibly been wrought. They receive additional confirmation from the testimonies of those enemies, who attribute them to magical art, or the use of a stolen name. They are also confirmed by the testimony of his suffering friends. It is true, the testimony of professed friends is thought suspicious, but the

testimony of the early friends of the gospel is of a peculiar nature. They were its enemies, bigoted Jews or superstitious heathens, till what they saw and heard, under the divine blessing, changed them into friends. No testimony can be stronger than that of a man once strongly opposed to any cause, but who, overcome by evidence, becomes the supporter of what he once opposed, and hazards his comfort, his life, his all, through the force of that conviction. This conviction did not arise from any prejudice the primitive Christians entertained in favour of those who first propagated religion, but from the wonderful facts which they saw performed. The miracles which our Lord and his apostles wrought gained them credit.* Besides the particulars recorded in the books of the New Testament, we have the express testimony of various early Christians and martyrs to the miracles of the Lord and his apostles. In an epistle written in the first century, and ascribed to Barnabas, the companion of Paul, besides reference to the sufferings of Christ, his miracles are generally, but plainly, referred to in the following words; "Finally, teaching the people of Israel, and doing many wonders and signs among them, he preached to them, and showed the exceeding great love which he bore towards them." Clement, a hearer of St. Paul, says, "The apostles have preached to us from our Lord Jesus Christ from God, for having received their command, and being thoroughly assured by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, they went abroad publishing that the kingdom of God was at hand.† Polycarp, a disciple of St. John and a martyr, recognises the resurrection and ascension of Christ. Irænaeus, another early Christian writer, says, that he had

* John ii. 11. iii. 2. iv. 53. ix. 16. xi. 45. xx. 30, 31, &c., &c.

† Ep. Barn. Ep. Clem. Rom.

heard from Polycarp "what he had received from eye-witnesses concerning the Lord, both concerning his miracles and his doctrine."* Ignatius, the contemporary of Polycarp, who also suffered martyrdom, is circumstantial on the resurrection of Jesus. Quadratus, of the same age, has left the following noble testimony: "The works of our Saviour were always conspicuous, for they were real; both they that were healed and they that were raised from the dead; who were seen, not only when they were healed or raised, but for a long time afterwards; not only whilst he dwelt on this earth, but also after his departure, and for a good while after it, insomuch that some of them have reached to our times."† About thirty years after Quadratus, Justin Martyr attested our Lord's works in the following passage: "He healed those who had been blind, and deaf, and lame, from their birth, causing by his word, one to leap, another to hear, and a third to see; and by raising the dead and making them to live, he induced by his works, the men of that age to know him."‡ It is true, some of these writers were not actually eye-witnesses of the miracles they mention, though others were; but they lived so early, that they had the best opportunity for investigating the truth of these miraculous accounts, and so full was their conviction, that several of them, for the sake of the Gospel, suffered martyrdom.

We may further observe, that multitudes of the early Christians must have been eye-witnesses of the miracles that confirmed the divine origin of the religion for which they died. Many of them were Jewish believers, and lived where Jesus taught; others were inhabitants of different places where miracles were wrought, which

* Iren. ad. Flor. ap. Euseb. l. 5. c. 20. † Ap. Euseb. H. E. l. 4. c. 3. ‡ Just Dial. cum Tryph. p. 288 Ed. Thirl.

are mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, or referred to in the Epistles. These must have known whether the accounts contained in the Gospels and the Acts were true or false, and whether miracles alluded to in Epistles written to themselves were wrought or not ; but so fully were they convinced of the truth of these facts, that they received as divine the books that record them ; held them in the highest estimation ; and in many instances, actually suffered persecution and death, rather than renounce the religion grounded on what they themselves had witnessed. The accounts of miracles in the gospels, must, if false, have been open to immediate detection, and still less possibility was there, that the epistles to particular churches should contain undetected falsehoods on the subject of miracles. The apostle Paul expressly refers to his miracles, and tells those to whom he wrote, that he had wrought them among themselves. Had he not actually done so, this would have been such a palpable falsehood, and so easily detected, that no man in his senses could have ventured such an assertion. He also refers to a power possessed by some among his converts of working miracles, which, if they had not possessed such a power would have been as absurd as for a modern advocate of the Gospel seriously to have told the infidel Paine that to himself had been communicated, the power of raising the dead in support of Christianity.*

These things furnish convincing proof that the early Christians must have known, that the miracles recorded in the New Testament were really wrought, and that many of them were eye-witnesses of these wonderful facts, or had seen the persons on whom they were performed ; for miracles were their boast, and well indeed they might be so. And the fact of their having

* 2 Cor. xii. 12. Gal. iii. 5. 1 Cor. xii. 9, 10-&c.

in various places been witnesses of them, makes the death of the early Christian martyrs such a powerful confirmation of the truth of Christianity. As their attention was first gained, and their reason convinced by the miracles they saw, they really suffered as witnesses to the truth of those facts, not merely to the belief in the opinion they grounded upon them. To illustrate this further: suppose persecution were now raging, and that multitudes of Christians were seized and burnt for their religion, in Smithfield, the place where popish cruelty once shed the blood of so many martyrs. The death of these persons would not prove the truth of Christianity, but it would decisively prove, that they believed it true. They would die witnesses to that belief. But if a multitude of persons who had become Christians, after seeing the diseased restored to health, and the dead to life, were martyred for religion, they would then die witnesses to these facts, as well as martyrs to the belief which sprung from them. And if the facts were of a nature which prevented the possibility of deception, the death of a number of martyrs, for a belief grounded on them, would incontestably prove their truth. Now, in consequence of a belief grounded on the miracles of the Lord and his apostles, multitudes endured martyrdom, and these not people of only one village, or one town, or one city, or one nation, but multitudes in countries far remote from each other; and these not merely the hardy and the brave, but the timid and the weak. Even women, forgetting their natural timidity, were bold in suffering for the name of Jesus. Christianity produced sufferers of a new description. Before its introduction, the courageous warrior or the hardened villain were the persons that looked on death with careless unconcern; but under the influence of the Gospel, the fearful and the ten-

der assumed a firmness exceeding that of the hardened villain, or the courageous warrior. With the gentle meekness of the lamb, was united the undaunted courage of the lion. The young and immature, as well as the more aged and robust, became sufferers for the sake of the Gospel. Nor was belief in the Gospel confined to the mean and illiterate, but miracles, with overwhelming evidence, convinced heathen philosophers and Jewish priests, some of whom were converts and martyrs. In the persecution at Rome under Nero, according to the testimony of Tacitus, a heathen historian, many Christians suffered martyrdom in various tormenting and dreadful forms. At this period the apostles Peter and Paul suffered death. Some of their fellow-sufferers must have been witnesses of the miracles which wrought so powerfully on many minds; and the martyrs, in this early persecution, suffered not for a belief handed down to them by others, but for what they had learned from the very first preachers of the Gospel; and which had been confirmed by the miracles those preachers wrought. The apostle John lived till Trajan's reign, and among the eminent persons, who had been conversant with the apostles, and who suffered subsequent to the first persecution, may be mentioned Ignatius, pastor of the Church at Antioch, who, in Trajan's reign, was exposed to wild beasts at Rome; and Polycarp, who had been a disciple of John, and who was burnt in the reign of Marcus Antoninus. As we know that these survived, and suffered long after the first persecution of the Christians, it is probable others might; that, for instance, among the Bithynian martyrs, whom the philosophic Pliny murdered, might be many who had witnessed the miracles of the immediate disciples of the Lord; but however that be, it must be evident, to any candid person, that they who

suffered death during the apostolic age, and even in the same persecution with some of the apostles, must have been intimately acquainted with their mighty works ; and by preferring death to a renunciation of the religion these confirmed, they became witnesses of their truth. Let it be remembered also, that according to the testimony of heathen historians, not one or two only at that time braved death, but multitudes : thousands sacrificed all that was dear to them, and suffered such torments, that death, by the stroke of an axe, would have been a favour. Let it also be considered, that during that period, when there was the best possible opportunity for investigating the truth of the miracles ascribed to the Lord and his apostles, multitudes were so convinced of their truth, that they embraced the religion for which they suffered, with no prospect but that of suffering. Little hope had they for this world ; their hopes must have been fixed upon a better. The worldly encouragement offered them for embracing the Gospel, was pains and penalties, shame and exile, imprisonment and death. Yet with this dark scene before them, did some, who perhaps till then had enjoyed the sunshine of continued prosperity, bid farewell to all the pleasures of life, to meet its roughest storms, face its dangers, and sink into the grave beneath them : such as Dionysius the Areopagite ; Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Jewish sanhedrim ; and Flavius Clemens, a Roman senator and consul ; all of whom, it is said, gained the crown of martyrdom—that crown, which, excepting the crown of glory, is the only one worth gaining. Yet while some were suffering, others were rushing forward to fill their places ; and as fast as some yielded to the rage of persecutors others appeared to brave their fury. The progress of Christianity at that time, may remind

us of the beast seen in vision by Daniel, in which as soon as one horn was broken, four more arose.

To these remarks it may be added, that had the miracles of Christianity been fictitious, some early apostate, some secret or avowed enemy would have discovered the imposition. There is abundant evidence that in the first age many who for a while professed religion apostatized. Some sunk back into sin, others into sin and heathenism. Is it possible to believe, it there had been any imposture practised in the establishment of Christianity, that all these would have maintained unbroken silence, and no one have lifted his voice to denounce the cheat? Even Judas, who saw the Lord in his most private hours, who witnessed all that passed behind the scene, as well as what took place before the public eye, was so far from detecting any imposture, that after his Lord was condemned, through grief and remorse he hung himself: "The repentance of this covetous disciple, dissipates every idea of a conspiracy. The field purchased with the money, for the burial of strangers, became a monument of instruction for all the world."* A conspiracy in which a few hundred conspirators unite, has seldom, if ever, long remained undiscovered. Some one has betrayed the whole. But if the miracles of the Gospel were a forgery, here was a conspiracy to establish Christianity by imposture, carried on through many years, in almost every part of the then known world, in the midst of opposition and of suffering, for which thousands laid down their lives, which thousands more forsook, which multitudes wished to prove a cheat, and yet no timorous friend, no apostate enemy unveiled the delusion and exposed the imposture. They who can be credulous enough to believe this have no cause to

* Pluche.

insult Christians with charges of credulity. The simple peasant who is firmly persuaded that witches ride on broom-handles through the air is not more credulous than these vaunting sons of reason!

Thus then we see that the early enemies of Christianity, by not disproving the miracles ascribed to Jesus and his apostles, in fact, allowed their truth; and that some of them actually confess this, by ascribing them to magic, or the use of a stolen name. We further see, that if the miracles related in the New Testament, had been the tales of impostors, the early Christians must have detected the falsehood, but, instead of this, they made miracles their boast; and numbers who must have seen them performed, suffered death for their belief, which originated from them; while none that apostatized from Christianity ever betrayed any imposture as connected with the means used for its establishment. Thus enemies and friends prove the truth of these wonderful facts, and these facts prove the truth of Christianity.

While taking this view of the subject, we may observe an important distinction between the early Christian martyrs, and those few enthusiasts, who may have had resolution enough to meet death, rather than renounce some wild opinions. The last suffered for fancies, that perhaps sprung from heated imagination; the former died witnesses to facts which they had seen performed. If some of the philosophists of the day should tell us that it is not Christianity only which has had its martyrs; we may reply, it is Christianity only that has had its myriads of willing martyrs; but if some wild sects should be pointed out that may boast a few, these were martyrs to fancies, not to facts.

8. Another attestation to the divine origin of Christianity, and to the miracles which proved its divinity,

springs from its rapid diffusion through the world. Both Christian and heathen writers unite in offering testimony to the rapid progress of the Gospel. Tacitus bears witness to this fact, and to the sufferings of the disciples of the Saviour. He says, that Nero, to free himself from the charge of having set fire to Rome, imputed that crime to the Christians. He adds, "They had their denomination from Christus, who in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death as a criminal by the procurator Pontius Pilate. This pernicious superstition, checked for the present, again broke out, and spread not only over Judea, the source of the evil, but through the city also, (Rome,) whither from all quarters all things vile and shameful flow and are practised. At first they were apprehended who confessed themselves of that sect. Afterwards a great multitude discovered by them, all of whom were condemned, not so much for the crime of burning the city as for their enmity to mankind. Their executions were so contrived as to expose them to derision and contempt. Some were covered over with the skins of wild beasts and torn to pieces by dogs; some were crucified; others, with combustible materials, were set up as lights in the night time, and thus burned. Nero made use of his own gardens as a theatre on this occasion, and also exhibited the diversions of the circus, sometimes standing in the crowd as a spectator, in the habit of a charioteer, at other times driving a chariot himself, till at length these men, though really criminal, and deserving exemplary punishment, began to be commiserated as people who were destroyed, not out of a regard to the public welfare, but only to gratify the cruelty of one man."*

This was but about thirty-four years after the ascen-

* Tacit. Ann. l. 15. c. 44.

sion of the Lord, yet so rapid had been the progress of the Gospel, that it had reached Rome, and there made a great multitude of converts, who preferred their religion to their lives. By what diabolical art it was effected, that besides the other ways of torturing, some of them served as lights in the streets by night, he does not inform us. Some suppose that they were covered with a pitched garment called the *tunica molesta*, which, being set on fire, would continue burning. The *tunica molesta* was one of the most dreadful kinds of punishment; it was "made like a sack of paper or coarse linen cloth, and having been besmeared within and without with pitch, wax, rosin, sulphur, and such like combustible materials, or dipt all over in them, was put on the person for whom it was appointed, and that he might be kept upright, the more to resemble a flaming torch, his chin was fastened to a stake fixed in the ground."

The learned Jacob Bryant says: "I imagine from a passage in Juvenal, that they had deep holes made in different parts of the body, in which wax tapers were inserted. In this manner they were exposed by day and by night in the streets; and when the tapers burned down to the quick, the pain in consequence of it must have been very great, and the spectacle which the poor sufferers exhibited must have been very horrid." Thus, in various ways, did these innocent victims suffer, as the historian observes, by the most studied torments. What but a divine religion could have proceeded in the midst of such opposition! What but a divine hand support multitudes of sufferers under such torments! What but infallible certainty that they had not followed cunningly-devised fables, could lead them to encounter such varied torments, when by renouncing Christianity, they might have easily escaped them all!

Pliny is another heathen writer who bears testimony to the rapid diffusion of Christianity. He was the friend of the emperor Trajan, and was appointed president of Bithynia, about A. D. 106, when some who had seen the miracles of the apostles must have been still living. He found Bithynia, though 1200 miles from Jerusalem, overrun with Christianity, and met with so many ready to suffer martyrdom, that at length, tired of executions, he wrote to Trajan for his directions. His whole letter deserves insertion :

“It is my constant custom, sir, to refer myself to you in all matters concerning which I have any doubt. For who can better direct me where I hesitate, or instruct me where I am ignorant? I have never been present at any trials of Christians, so that I know not well what is the subject matter of punishment or of inquiry, or what strictness ought to be used in either. Nor have I been a little perplexed to determine whether any difference ought to be made upon account of ages, or whether the tender and the robust ought to be treated all alike ; whether repentance should entitle to pardon, or whether it shall be of no advantage to him who has once been a Christian to have ceased being such ; whether the name itself, although no crimes be detected, or whether only crimes belonging to the name ought to be punished. Concerning all these things I am in doubt.

“In the mean time I have taken this course with all who have been brought before me, and have been accused as Christians. I have put the question to them, whether they were Christians? Upon their confessing to me that they were, I repeated the question a second and a third time, threatening also to punish them with death. Such as still persisted, I ordered to be led away ; for it was no doubt with me, whatever it was they

should have confessed, that contumacy and inflexible obstinacy ought to be punished. There were others of the same madness, whom, because they are Roman citizens, I have noted down to be sent to the city.

“In a short time the crime spreading itself even while under persecution, as is usual in such cases, divers sort of people came in my way. An information was presented to me without mentioning the author, containing the names of many persons who, upon examination, denied that they were Christians, or had ever been so, who repeated after me an invocation of the gods, and with wine and frankincense sacrificed to your image, which, for that purpose, I had caused to be brought and set before them, together with the statues of the deities. Moreover, they reviled the name of Christ; none of which things, as is said, they who are really Christians, can, by any means, be compelled to do; these, therefore, I thought proper to discharge.

“Others were named by an informer, who at first confessed themselves Christians, and afterwards denied it. The rest said they had been Christians but had left them, some three years ago, some longer, and one or more above twenty years. They all worshipped your image, and the statues of the gods; they also reviled Christ. They affirmed that the whole of their fault or error lay in this, that they were accustomed to meet together on a stated day before it was light, and sang among themselves, alternately, a hymn to Christ as a God, (or addressed themselves in a form of prayer to Christ as to some God,)* and bound themselves by an oath (sacramento) not to the commission of any wickedness, but not to be guilty of theft, or robbery, or adultery; never to falsify their word, nor to deny a pledge committed to them, when called upon

* Melmoth.

to return it. When these things were performed, it was their custom to separate, and then to come together again to a meal promiscuous and harmless, but which had been forborne since the publication of my edict, by which, according to your commands, I prohibited assemblies.

“Through this I judged it more necessary to examine, and that by torture, two maid servants, who were called ministers; but I have discovered nothing besides a bad and excessive superstition.

“Suspending, therefore, proceeding, I have recourse to you for advice. For it has appeared to me a matter worthy of consideration, especially on account of the great number of persons who are in danger of suffering. For many of all ages and of both sexes also are brought into danger, and will be brought. Nor has the contagion of this superstition spread through cities only, but through the towns (villages) and open country.—It seems that it may be restrained and corrected. It is certain that the almost desolated temples begin to be frequented, and the sacred solemnities, after a long intermission, are revived; and that the victims are everywhere bought, for which, before, a buyer was very rarely found; whence it is easy to imagine what a multitude of men might be reclaimed if place were granted for repentance.”

Trajan, in reply, approved Pliny's proceedings, but ordered Christians not to be sought out, but when brought and convicted, to be punished; but allowed those to be forgiven who would repent and supplicate their gods.*

* Tertullian justly ridicules this unrighteous edict, and exposes the manner in which Christians were persecuted merely for a name, while common report was charging them with killing and eating infants, and with the basest crimes. “Oh what immortal glory would a proconsul gain among the people could he pull out a Christian by the ears that had eat up a hundred children! But we despair of any such glorious discovery when we reflect on the edict against

This celebrated letter bears testimony to various important facts. Here we see the patience of the saints: when in the power of their philosophic murderer, they preferred suffering death to renouncing their Redeemer. Hence we learn how great, how rapid had been the success of the Gospel: a heathen philosopher and priest declares, that it had desolated the temples of Bithynia; and had literally, for a time, annihilated the sacred rites of heathenism. Nor is that part of the letter less remarkable in which he notices what he had learned respecting Christianity from those who had forsaken it; some of them even twenty years. No system of imposture was detected. He makes no statement of this kind, though he himself treated it as a base and extravagant superstition.

After this reference to Pliny's testimony, it is not uninteresting to remark the wide contrast that existed between the persecuting philosopher and the innocent victims of his cruelty. He was, as it appears from his own writings, devoted to idols, and acknowledged as objects of worship the impure rabble of heathen deities; they adored the Creator of heaven and earth. He was an augur, who sought instructions from dreams, oracles, prodigies, and various superstitious rites; they were guided by the infallible counsels of the Book of God. They followed peace, benevolence, and love;

searching after us.—Oh, perplexity between reasons of state and justice! He declares us to be innocent by forbidding us to be searched after, and, at the same time, commands us to be punished as criminals. What a mass of kindness and cruelty, connivance and punishment, is here confounded in one act! Unhappy edict! thus to circumvent and hamper yourself in your own ambiguous answer! If you condemn us, why do you give orders against searching after us? and if you think it not well to search after us, why do you not acquit us? Soldiers are set to patrol in every province for the apprehending of robbers—a Christian only is a criminal of that strange kind that no inquiry must be made to find him, and yet when found may be brought to the tribunal. You condemn him therefore when brought, whom the laws forbid to be searched after; not that in your hearts you can think him guilty, but only to get into the good graces of the people, whose zeal has transported them to search him out, against the intention of the edict."

he approved of the cruel and bloody combats of gladiators, in which, for the amusement of spectators, crowds of men fought to death with their fellow men, or with savage beasts of prey. Thus he writes to a friend: "You were extremely in the right to promise a combat of gladiators to our good friends the citizens of Verona; not only as they have long distinguished you with their peculiar esteem and veneration, but as it was there also you received the amiable object of your affection—your late excellent wife. To her memory you owed some monument or public show, and *this especially as most suited to the occasion*. I am sorry that the African panthers, which you had *largely* provided for that purpose, did not arrive in time." Contrast with Pliny's pleasure in scenes like these, where men murdered each other, and where savage beasts drank the blood and tore the bodies of hapless men, and with his sorrow that some of the most savage of those beasts had not arrived in time to celebrate in the groans, and sighs, and blood, and dying agonies of their miserable victims, the death of an amiable woman; contrast with all this the Christians, according to his own account, meeting to sing a hymn to Christ; and to bind themselves to commit no crime; and which must you admire, Pliny, the philosophic persecutor, whom the lovers of classic heathenism extol and infidels admire, or those whom he persecuted, but whose names were written in the Lamb's book of life? Yet Pliny was one of the most amiable and best of ancient heathens; what, then, were the worst! and what is the value of that religion which proclaims glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men! Like Pliny, Trajan was an admirer of gladiatorial shows, which on one occasion in his reign were continued for 123 days; in them 11,000 beasts were killed, and 10,000 men en-

gaged in combats: and, much as Trajan has been extolled in history, according to Dion Cassius, he was polluted with vice too infamous to be mentioned.

The writings of Tacitus and Pliny thus furnish important evidence to various interesting facts connected with the early diffusion of Christianity. To their testimonies may be added that of Lucian, not indeed as referring to the extension of Christianity, but to the spirit and patience of its early professors, and as bearing testimony to various important facts; especially that in Palestine, where Christianity arose, it still prevailed; that the Lord Jesus, who was crucified, was the object of Christian worship; and that in imitation of him, the Christians were intent on acts of benevolence and love. In describing the conduct of a philosopher named Peregrius, often called Proteus, who, when an old man, about the year 165 or 169, threw himself into the flames, at the Olympic games, in the sight of multitudes, and who appears in his early life to have professed Christianity, and to have been a base hypocrite, Lucian writes: "He learned the wonderful doctrines of the Christians by conversing with their priests and scribes near Palestine; and in a short time he showed they were but children to him.—They still worship that great man who was crucified in Palestine, because he introduced into the world this new religion. For this reason, Proteus was taken up and put into prison, which very thing was of no small service to him afterwards for giving reputation to his impostures, and gratifying his vanity. The Christians were much grieved for his imprisonment, and tried all ways to procure his liberty. Not being able to effect that, they did him all sorts of kind offices, and that not in a careless manner, but with the greatest assiduity: for even betimes in the morning, there would be at the prison old

women, some widows, and also little orphan children; and some of the chief of their men, by corrupting the keepers, would get into prison, and stay the whole night with him: there they had a good supper together and their sacred discourses.—Even from the cities of Asia some Christians came to him, by an order of the body, to relieve, encourage, and comfort him. For it is incredible what expedition they use when any of their friends are known to be in trouble. In a word, they spare nothing upon such an occasion; for these miserable men have no doubt they shall be immortal, and live forever; therefore they despise death, and many of them surrender themselves to sufferings. Moreover their first Lawgiver has taught them, that they are all brethren, when once they have turned and renounced the gods of the Greeks, and worship this Master of theirs who was crucified, and engaged to live according to his laws. They have also a sovereign contempt for all the things of this world, and look upon them as common: and trust one another with them without any particular security.”* Precious testimony to the influence of the Gospel! more precious as delivered not by a glowing friend, but a scoffing enemy!

To those statements respecting the diffusion and powerful effects of Christianity, which are furnished by heathen writers, may be added the testimony of some of its suffering friends. Justin Martyr, who is supposed to have been born within seventy years after the Lord's ascension, who was a heathen philosopher, but who embraced Christianity, and who in the year 140 (or 106 years after the ascension) presented an apology for the Christians to the Roman emperor Antonine, declares it as a notorious fact, that there was no nation of men, whether Greeks or barbarians, not

* Lucian de mort. Per.

excepting even those wild stragglers, the Amaxobii and Nomades, (nations who led a wandering life, and lived in tents,) who had no fixed habitation, who had not learned to invoke the one Father and Former of all things, in the name of Jesus who was crucified.

This declaration is the more remarkable, as it is made in his dialogue with Trypho, an inveterate enemy. Justin suffered martyrdom about the year 165; and about thirty years after his death, Clement of Alexandria, comparing the success of Christianity and of various philosophical systems, remarks, "The philosophers were confined to Greece and to their particular retainers, but the doctrine of the Master of Christianity did not remain in Judea, as philosophy did in Greece, but it spread throughout the *whole world*, in every nation, and village, and city, both of Greeks and barbarians, converting both whole houses and separate individuals, having already brought over to the truth not a few of the philosophers themselves. If the Greek philosophy be prohibited, it immediately vanishes; whereas, from the first preaching of *our* doctrine, kings and tyrants, governors and presidents, with their whole train, and with the populace on their side, have endeavoured with their whole might to exterminate it, yet it flourishes more and more."*

About the same time as Clement wrote, or, at the utmost, but a few years afterwards, Tertullian ventured to appeal to the Roman governors, in language which could only have exposed him and the cause of Christianity to ridicule, if the number of Christians had not been immense: "We are but of yesterday, and we have filled all that is yours. Cities, islands, forts, towns, assemblies, the camps themselves, wards, companies,

* Clement's Stromata, or Various Discourses, book 6.

the palace, the senate, the forum. We leave you only your temples."

Referring to the love of Christians to their enemies, the same writer remarks, "What war can we now be unprepared for? and supposing us unequal in strength, yet considering our usage, what should we not attempt readily? We whom you see so ready to meet death in all its forms of cruelty, were it not agreeable to our religion to be killed rather than to kill.

"We could also make a terrible war upon you without arms or fighting, by being so passively revengeful as only to leave you:—if such a numerous host of Christians should but retire from the empire into some remote region of the world, the loss of so many men of all ranks and degrees, would leave a hideous gap, and a shameful scar upon the government; and the very evacuation would be abundant revenge.—You would stand aghast at your desolation, and be struck dumb at the general silence and horror of nature, as if the whole world was departed. You would be at a loss for men to govern, and in the pitiful remains you would find more enemies than citizens; but now you exceed in friends, because you exceed in Christians."*

About thirty years after Tertullian, Origen, in his discourse against Celsus, remarks, that throughout all Greece, and in all other nations, there were "innumerable and immense multitudes, who, having left the laws of their country and those they esteemed gods," had "given themselves to the religion of Christ; and this not without the bitterest resentment from the idolaters, by whom they were frequently put to torture, and sometimes to death." He also says, "It is wonderful to observe, how in so short a time, the religion has increased, amidst punishment and death, and every kind

* Tertull. Ap. c. xxxvii.

of torture.”—In the same work, referring to Christians, he remarks: “By how much the more emperors and governors of provinces and the people every where strove to depress them, so much the more have they increased and prevailed exceedingly.”

9. These ancient testimonies (and others might be added) show that Christianity speedily spread abroad to an astonishing extent. This rapid extension of Christianity appears the more remarkable, when we consider its nature. Think how averse even the professedly Christian world are to comply with what it requires; think how difficult you find this duty; and then think how much more difficult must ancient heathens, immersed in the lowest depths of sensuality and vice, have found it to embrace the holy Gospel. Compare what modern missions have been able to effect, when not placed in such unfavourable circumstances as the apostles were, but under the protection of powerful governments. How few converts have crowned their labours. Yet they are preaching the same Gospel; and what can be the reason of so great a difference in their success, but that the first enjoyed peculiar divine aid, and at once convinced their hearers of the truth of what they preached, by commanding the diseased to health, or the dead to life, while the latter labour to convince them by evidence, which, to such persons, and so situated, they can but slowly unfold? Suppose twelve men, possessed of no supernatural powers, were now to disperse themselves into different countries, that they might disciple the world, you cannot suppose they would meet with success; yet on such an errand twelve men, professedly the followers of a crucified Master, once set out, and soon converted thousands and tens of thousands. They had to encounter the pride of philosophers, the riches of the wealthy, the influence of

priests, the power of princes, and worse than all these, all the corrupt passions of the human heart in the whole mass of mankind, and yet they triumphed ! Theirs was a message of such a nature, and delivered under such circumstances, that not one human being would naturally be friendly to it. Princes would scorn Galilean fishermen, going forth as instructors of the world. Philosophers would despise a wisdom which represented their boasted wisdom as folly. Priests would hate a system that would overturn their altars, desolate their temples, and strip them of all their ill-gotten wealth, influence, and grandeur. The people would abhor a system that forbade all their idolatrous revellings, and struck at the root of all their superstitions. And princes, philosophers, priests, and people would all hate a religion that declared them to be perishing in sin; that pronounced their hearts depraved, their lives wicked, their hopes false, their worship abominable idolatry, and their gods senseless blocks of wood and stone; which would compromise nothing, but firmly required the renunciation of all their vices, or foretold their eternal destruction ; and that thus left them no alternative between repentance and perdition. Yet, though the religion of the Gospel is of so holy and unyielding a nature, that every class in society would be armed against it, and an enemy be found in every human heart ; yet, hated, despised, and persecuted, it marched on from conquering to conquer ; desolating idol temples, overturning the hoary systems of heathen superstition, and in its most effectual triumph, bringing millions to receive Jesus Christ as their all for time, and their bliss for eternity. Whence sprung these triumphs but from the power of the Most High ? In them we see the finger of God.

That this was the cause of its triumph, cannot reason-

ably be denied ; yet if a reasonable denial were as possible as it is impossible, it has been strikingly remarked, "If it be denied that Jesus performed miracles, how great then is that miracle, that so many should be the followers of a man poor, despised, destitute of miraculous power ; that when he is dead they should die for him."

10. After this survey of some decisive proofs of the divinity of Christianity, and this glance at its rapid diffusion, it will not be uninteresting, and cannot be un-instructive, to notice the spirit with which the primitive disciples suffered the persecutions to which, for nearly three centuries, they were more or less exposed. Besides confiscations, imprisonments, torments, and death, they were loaded with the basest calumnies. They were represented as indulging in their religious meetings in the most horrid impurities, and as eating the flesh and drinking the blood of infants. They were represented as atheists, because they worshipped not the idols of the nations. The name of Christian was frequently sufficient to ensure their condemnation. The Lord's prophecy was strikingly verified ; "Ye shall be hated of all men for *my name's sake*." Many affecting, and, to a pious mind, delightful illustrations of their spirit amidst these scenes of suffering are to be found in the writings of the primitive apologists.

Justin Martyr writes, "It is a maxim among us Christians, that we cannot possibly suffer any real hurt, if we cannot be convicted of doing any real evil. *You may kill us indeed, but you cannot hurt us.*—It is in our power, at any time, to escape your torments, by denying the faith, when you question us about it, but we scorn to purchase life at the expense of a lie, for our souls are winged with desire of a life of eternal duration and purity, of an immediate conversation with God

the Father and Maker of all things; we are in haste to be confessing and finishing our faith, being fully persuaded that we shall arrive at this beatific state, if we approve ourselves to God by our works; and express by our obedience our passion for that divine life, which is never interrupted by any clashing evil.

“Upon the first word you hear of our expectations of a kingdom, you rashly conclude it must be a kingdom upon earth, notwithstanding all we can say that it is one in heaven; and though you have such an experimental proof to the contrary, from our professing ourselves Christians upon examination, when we know death to be the certain consequence of such a profession: but were our thoughts fixed upon a kingdom of this world, we should surely deny our religion, for the safety of our lives; and have recourse to all the methods of concealment, to secure us unhurt against the good day we expected. But since our hopes do not fasten upon things present, the preservation of our lives is the least of our concern, because we know our murderers can cut us short but a few days; for all must die.”

“Our Master Jesus Christ, from whom we take the name of Christians, the Son and Apostle of that God, who is the supreme Lord and Maker of the universe, has foretold our sufferings; which to us is a manifest confirmation of the truth of all his other doctrines, because we see these things fulfilled according to his prediction; for this or nothing is the work of God, to declare a thing shall come to be long before it is in being, and then to bring about that thing to pass according to the same declaration.”

Minucius Felix, who lived about the same time as Tertullian, remarks; “How fair a spectacle in the sight of God is a Christian entering the lists with affliction, and, with a noble firmness, combating menaces, racks,

and tortures ! When, with a disdainful smile, he marches to execution, through the clamours of the people, and insults the horrors of the executioner ! When he bravely maintains his liberty against kings and princes, and submits to God alone, whose servant he is ? When like a conqueror he triumphs over the judge that condemns him ! A soldier of God is neither abandoned in misery nor lost in death. And though a Christian may seem to be miserable, yet in reality he can never be so. Some sufferers you yourselves exalt to the skies ; such as Mutius Scevola, who, having missed his aim in killing a king, voluntarily burnt the mistaking hand, and so saved his life by his hardiness. And how many persons are there among us who have suffered not only their hand, but their whole body to be burnt, without complaining, when their deliverance was in their own power ? But why do I compare our *men* with your *Mucius*, or *Aquilius*, or *Regulus*, when our very children, our sons and our daughters, by an inspired patience, make a mere jest of your gibbets, and racks and wild beasts, and all your other scarecrows of cruelty. And is not this enough to convince you, that nothing but the strongest reasons could persuade men to suffer at this rate ; and nothing less than Almighty power support them ?”

The declarations of Tertullian, when appealing upon this subject to the persecutors themselves, are very spirited and peculiarly pleasing ; “ We argue against our adversaries upon two articles—for hating us ignorantly, and, consequently, for hating us unjustly. And that you hate us ignorantly I prove from hence, because all who hated us heretofore did it upon the same ground, being no longer able to continue our enemies, than they continued ignorant of our religion ; their hatred and their ignorance fell together. Such are the men you

now see Christians, manifestly overcome by the piety of our profession; and who now reflect upon their lives past with abhorrence, and profess it to the world.—We have been heathens as you are, for men are not born but made Christians.—We say we are Christians, and say it to the whole world, under the hands of the executioner, and in the midst of all the tortures you exercise us with to unsay it. Torn and mangled, and covered over in our own blood, we cry out as loud as we are able to cry, that we are worshippers of God through Christ. It is in every one's mouth, that Christ was a man, and a man too condemned to death by the very Jews—however this, their wickedly ungrateful treatment of Christ makes us not ashamed of our Master; so far from it that it is the joy and triumph of our souls to be called by our Lord's name and condemned for it. The truth we profess we know to be a stranger upon earth, and she expects not friends in a strange land; but she came from heaven, and her abode is there, and there are all our hopes, all our friends, and all our preferments.

“The guilty hunt for refuge in darkness, and when apprehended, tremble; when accused, deny; and are hardly to be tormented into a confession; when condemned, they sink down in sadness, and turn over their number of sins into confusion of conscience, and charge the guilt upon the stars or destiny; unwilling to acknowledge that as their own act, which they acknowledge to be criminal.

“But do you see anything like this in the deportment of Christians? Not one Christian blushes or repents, unless it be for not having been a Christian sooner. If a Christian goes to trial, he goes like a victor, with the air of triumph; if he is impeached, he glories in it; if indicted, he makes no defence at bar; when in-

terrogated, he frankly confesses; and when condemned, returns thanks to his judges.

“What reason, say you, have we Christians to complain of our sufferings, when we are so fond of persecution? we ought rather to love those who persecuted us so sweetly to our heart’s content. It is true, indeed, *we are not against suffering when the Captain of our salvation calls us forth to suffer*; but let me tell you, it is with us in our Christian warfare as it is with you in yours, we choose to suffer as you choose to fight; but no man chooses fighting for fighting’s sake, because he cannot engage without fear and hazard of life. Nevertheless, when the brave soldier finds he must engage, he battles it off with all his power, and if he comes off victorious, is full of joy, though just before not without his complaints of a military life, because he has obtained his end, laden with glory, laden with spoil. Thus it is with Christians: we enter into battle when we are cited to your tribunals, there to combat for truth with the hazard of our life. To set up truth is our victory, and the victor’s glory is to please his God, and the precious spoil of that victory is eternal life; and this life we certainly win by dying for it; therefore we conquer when we are killed; and being killed, are out of the reach of you, and all other vexations for ever.

“Give us now what names you please, from the instruments of cruelty by which you torture us; call us *sarmenticians* and *semaxians*, because you fasten us to trunks of trees, and stick us about with fagots to set us on fire; yet let me tell you, when we are thus begirt and dressed about with fire, we are then in our most triumphant apparel. These are our victorious palms and robes of glory; and mounted upon our funeral pile we look upon ourselves in our triumphal chariot. No

wonder, then, that such passive heroes please not those they vanquish with such conquering sufferings; and therefore we pass for men of despair, and violently bent upon our own destruction. However, that which you are pleased to call madness and despair in us, are the very actions which, under Virtue's standard, lift up your sons of fame and glory, and emblazon them to future ages. A man shall suffer with honour for his country, for the empire, for a friend, what he is not tolerated to suffer for his God. He who expects a real resurrection, and in hopes of this suffers for the word of God, shall pass among you for a sot and a madman."

The invincible passive courage of the early Christians contributed greatly to promote the diffusion of religion. Lactantius observes, "It is through our divine peace and the miracle of our courage, that multitudes come over to us. For when the common people behold men torn to pieces by various kinds of torments, yet maintain unconquered patience in the midst of their *wearied* tormentors, they suppose, what is really the case, that the consent of so many, and the perseverance of the dying, cannot be vain and unfounded; and that patience to overcome such dreadful torments could not exist, unless from God."

Much of a practical nature may be learned from contemplating these illustrations of primitive fortitude, and much more from observing the spirit of elevated piety which glowed in the hearts, and is breathed forth in the writings, of some of the early followers of the Lord.

Justin remarks; "It is certain, we cannot justly be branded as atheists, we who worship the Creator of the universe, not with blood, libations, and incense, of which we are sufficiently taught he stands in no need; but we exalt him, to the best of our power, with the

rational service of prayers and praises, in all the oblations we make to him; believing this to be the only honour worthy of him; not to consume the creatures which he has given us for our use, and the comfort of those that want, in the fire by sacrifice, but to approve ourselves thankful to him in the rational pomp of the most solemn hymns at the altar, in acknowledgment of our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of variety in things and seasons; and also for the hopes of a resurrection to a life incorruptible, which we are sure to have for asking, provided we ask in faith. Who that knows any thing of us will not confess this to be our way of worshipping? and who can stigmatize such worshippers for atheists? The Master who instructed us in this kind of worship, and who was born for this very purpose, and crucified under Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, in the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, is Jesus Christ, whom we know to be the Son of the true God, and therefore hold him the second in order, and the Prophetic Spirit the third. Here they look upon it as downright madness to assign to a crucified man the next place to the immutable, eternal God, parent of all things, being entirely in the dark as to the mystery of this order."

"We are taught, and most firmly believe and know, that they only are the acceptable worshippers of God who form their minds by the mind Eternal, and express it in temperance, justice, humanity, and such other virtues as are the essential excellences of the divine nature."

"We who heretofore delighted in debauchery, now strictly contain within the bonds of chastity. We, who devoted ourselves to magic arts, now consecrate ourselves entirely to the good, unbegotten God. We, who loved nothing like our possessions, now produce all

we have in common, and spread our whole stock before our indigent brethren. We, who were pointed with mutual hatred and destruction, and would not so much as warm ourselves at the same fire with those of a different tribe, upon the account of different institutions, now, since the coming of Christ, dwell and diet together, and pray for our enemies; and all our returns for evil are but the gentlest persuasives to convert those who unjustly hate us.

“A Christian hand must by no means be lifted up in resistance; for Christ will not have his disciples like the rest of the world, but orders them to shine with a distinguished patience and meekness, and to win men over from their sins by such gentle arts of conversion. And I could give you a proof of the influence of such bright examples from many converts among us, who, from men of violence and oppression, were transformed into quite another nature, perfectly overcome by the passive courage of their Christian neighbours; or by observing the new astonishing patience of such injured Christians as they chanced to travel with; or the experience they had of their fidelity in their dealings.”

Athenagoras, who wrote an apology for Christianity, which is inscribed to the emperor Marcus Aurelius, soon after Justin's martyrdom, writes, “What are our rules? Even these: ‘Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, pray for them that persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.’ Since I make my apology before emperors who are philosophers, let me challenge any of the tribe of sophisters, who yet pretend to give their readers such information and happiness from these studies, to show such a mild disposition of soul, a heart so cleared from

rancour and malice, as to return even their enemies love for hatred ; to bless those who unjustly revile them ; nay, to pray for those who attempt their very lives. Among us you find unlettered men, ordinary mechanics, and women, though they cannot by words defend or advantage our religion, yet adorn it, and set it off by bright examples in their actions. They study not the fineness of composition, but practise the solidity of virtue ; when struck they strike not again ; they prosecute not those who rob them ; they are charitable to such as stand in need of their assistance ; and, in a word, love their neighbours, that is all men, as themselves. Being thoroughly convinced that we shall one day give an account of our lives and actions to the great Creator of us and all the world, we choose such a gentle, meek, and generally despised, method of life ; assuring ourselves that we can suffer no evil from our persecutors, (no, though it were the loss of our very lives,) which can be of any value or consideration when compared to that exceeding great reward which God will give us hereafter.

“ Our accusers charge us with feasting on human flesh and incests. The integrity of our lives is not blemished by the accusations of our enemies. Before God we are still innocent. Had we no hopes beyond the present life and sensual enjoyments, there might be a probability we might follow the dictates of flesh and blood, and be lovers of pleasure and lovers of money. But we believe that an omnipresent and omniscient Being observes our thoughts and actions, and that he is light and sees the hidden things of our hearts ; we believe that after being delivered from this mortal condition, we shall enjoy a happier and an eternal heavenly life hereafter, living for ever with God, not subject to passion or change, not like flesh and blood, though we

shall have bodies, but like pure heavenly spirits; and the truth of this we confess even at the stake and in the midst of the flames. Since this is our faith, it is absurd to suppose we should study and endeavour to commit such unheard-of wickedness, and voluntarily expose ourselves to be punished by the great Judge. How can we be suspected of any breach of chastity, who dare not use our very eyes otherwise than God designed them, that is, to be lights to our bodies? who think that to look with desire is to commit adultery, nay, believe we shall be judged for our very thoughts? For we are not under a human dispensation and law, where we might be wicked and concealed; but we have received our law from God; and we have a law which requires the most exact justice with regard to ourselves, and from us to our neighbours. Therefore, according to the differences of age, we esteem some as brothers and sisters, and others as sons and daughters. The elder we honour as fathers and mothers; and esteem it one of the greatest acts of our religion to preserve chaste and unpolluted the bodies of those whom we call brothers and sisters, or by any name of kindred. Having a sure hope of everlasting life, we despise the present sensual pleasures and enjoyments. Our religion is not a study of words, but a practice of actions and virtues."

Tertullian observes, "To wish ill, to do ill, to speak ill, or to think ill of any one, we are forbidden without exception. What is injustice to an emperor is injustice to his slave."

"The God we pray to is the eternal God, the true God, the God of life. To this Almighty Maker and Disposer of all things, it is that we Christians offer up our prayers, with eyes lifted up to heaven, unfolded hands in token of our simplicity, and with uncovered

heads, because we have nothing to blush for in our devotion, and without a prompter, because we pray with our hearts rather than our tongues.—These are blessings I cannot persuade myself to ask of any but him who I know can give them; and that is my God, and only my God who has them at his disposal; and I am one to whom he has obliged himself by promise to grant what I ask, if I ask as I should do. For I am his servant, and serve him only for whose service I am killed all the day long; and to whom I offer that noble and greatest of sacrifices which he has commanded—a prayer that comes from a chaste body, an innocent soul, and a sanctified spirit.”

“Thus then while we are stretching forth our hands to God, let your tormenting irons harrow our flesh; let your gibbets exalt us, or your fires lick up our bodies, or your swords cut off our heads, or your beasts tread us to the earth. For a Christian upon his knees to his God, is in a posture of defence against all the evils you can crowd upon him.”

Minucius furnishes a charming delineation of what, doubtless, in his day multitudes of Christians were. “Our feasts are not only chaste, but sober; for we neither indulge in eating, nor do we spin out the repast with wine, but temper cheerfulness with gravity. Pure in discourse, in body purer. Nor are we factious though we are all bent upon the same kingdom, and relish but one and the same happiness; for we are as quiet and inoffensive in our assemblies, as when we are all alone. The daily increase of our numbers is so far from a disparagement to our religion, that it is a testimony in its commendation; for the Christian party are faithful adherents to their holy profession, and are continually augmented by heathens. Nor do we know one another by any private marks upon our bodies, as you vainly

imagine, but our innocence and modesty are our badges of distinction. The love which, to your sorrow, we express to one another, is because we are perfect strangers to all hatred. And whereas we call ourselves *brethren*, a title you most envy us, for it is because we look upon ourselves as the children of the one God, parent of all things; as partakers of the same faith, and co-heirs of the same hope. You punish wickedness in the overt act, and we look upon it as criminal when it goes no further than the bare thought; you dread the consciousness of others, and we stand in awe of nothing but our own consciences, without which we cannot be Christians. Your prisons are in a manner stifled with criminals, but they are all heathens, not a Christian there, but either a confessor or an apostate. —Many of us are reproached with poverty. I must tell you that we look upon it not as our infamy but our honour. Yet who can be said to be poor who finds himself in no want? who has no gapings after another's possessions, who is rich in God? We had much rather be able to despise riches than to possess them. Innocence is the top of our desire; patience the thing we beg for; and we had rather be abundantly good than extravagantly rich. And though we lie under afflictions of body, to which, as men, we are exposed, yet we look upon this not as our punishment but our warfare. It is not therefore that we are such sufferers because our God is either unable or unwilling to help us, since he is both the Sovereign of the world, and a lover of his servants, but he tries and examines us by adversity."

"We celebrate the funerals of our dead with the same decency and quiet in which we live; dress up no withering garland, but the never-fading crown of glory we expect from God; we who sit down contented with the liberality of our God in this life, who live above

fears in the hopes of future felicity, and are animated in these hopes by the assurances we now have of that divine majesty which is so present to us in time of need, thus happy shall we find ourselves in the resurrection, and blessed all our life long in the contemplation of what shall be. Behold how all nature is at work to comfort us with images of our future resurrection. The sun sets and rises again; the stars glide away and return; the flowers die and revive; the trees put forth afresh after the decays of age; and that *which thou sowest is not quickened except it die*. Just so may our bodies lie in the grave till the season of resurrection. Why then so hasty for a resurrection in the dead of winter? We must wait with patience for the spring of human bodies.”*

These testimonies to the spirit of the early disciples of the Saviour, are not valuable merely as illustrating the character of those who by thousands sacrificed their all for Christ, but as teaching us what should be the spirit of Christians now. Reader, are you professedly a Christian? If so, are you influenced by the spirit just described? Do you so count all things loss for Christ's sake as to be willing to suffer reproach and shame, and every evil for him? Are your affections placed above, and are you panting for a home in Heaven? and, while struggling through the wilderness of life, have you learned to display the meekness and gentleness, the benevolence and kindness of Christ? Have you learned to wish ill, to do ill, to speak ill, to think ill of none? to conquer foes by kindness, and enmity by love? Perhaps, instead of this, you feel convinced that

*The passages here brought together are collected from the Apologies of the writers quoted. As most of these works are brief, it is judged unnecessary to refer to the parts in which the selected passages are to be found. The translation of Minucius Felix, Justin, and Tertullian, is that by Reeves, though occasionally slightly altered.

no one part of the description applies to yourself. If so, delude not yourself by fancying that you are a Christian, when your character is as different from that of those who first bore that honoured name as darkness is from light. But perhaps you can trace the likeness in yourself, though in lines too faint. Then, O pray that you may more resemble them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises;—above all, strive and pray that you may resemble their exalted Lord, from whose grace and example all their excellences were derived.

CHAPTER III.

THE PROPHECIES OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT A PROOF OF THE DIVINE ORIGIN ON CHRISTIANITY.

1. PROPHECY is another kind of evidence which strongly attests the divinity of Christianity, and of the holy scriptures. Futurity is so hidden from the inspection of man, that no human being can certainly foretell the events of the morrow; but still more unable is man to declare what shall happen in distant ages, among the unborn generations of nations not yet existing. Yet it is an incontrovertible fact, that many events of this description were foretold by the prophets, by the Lord Jesus, or his apostles. Some of these have long since been fulfilled, and others are now accomplishing.

2. Nearly 3800 years ago, it was foretold respecting Ishmael, the father of the Arabians, "He shall be a wild man, his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren," Gen. xvi. 12. This

prophecy is easily shown to refer to his descendants as much or more than himself, (see Gen. xvii. 20.) and has been remarkably fulfilled for age after age down to the present time. Still do the Arabians retain the wild character which has distinguished them for above 3000 years. Mighty conquerors and nations have warred against them, but never finally subdued them. Those nations are vanished away, but the descendants of Ishmael still exist a distinct people, dreaded by neighbouring nations against whom their hands are turned, but still unsubdued and independent.

3. Three thousand three hundred years ago, Moses, the lawgiver of the Jews, declared to them, that if they forsook their God, after an enemy from a distant country had destroyed their cities, and heaped numerous miseries upon them, the Lord would scatter them among all people, from one end of the earth even to the other; and that among these nations they should find no rest for the sole of their foot, Deut. xxviii. 64. For nearly 1800 years has this prophecy been receiving a dreadful accomplishment. Their cities were destroyed, their temple burnt, their country seized, and nearly two millions of them slaughtered, by the Romans, in the reigns of Vespasian and Adrian. Since that period they have been scattered through the world, and trodden under foot, not merely in professedly Christian countries, but even by heathen nations, who are unacquainted with the crime that has exposed them to the wrath of Heaven. Their history since their expulsion from Judea is little else than a detail of the extortion, oppression, and persecution which they have endured; and of their exile from one country or another, so that though scattered through the world, they have been without a country they could call their own. Considerably above 2000 years ago, the Lord by an-

other prophet declared, "I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee, but I will not make a full end of thee," Jer. xlv. 28. Not less remarkably is this prophecy fulfilling at the present day. The Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Romans, and other nations, that conquered the Jews, are blotted from the list of nations,—their name and history is all that remains of them; but the Jews, oppressed, despised, exiled, trodden in the dust, still continue a distinct people, mixed with almost all nations, but united to none: they exist a continued miracle;—a standing testimony to the divinity of that book, which records their crimes, and foretells their sorrows, their dispersion, and yet their preservation.

4. The scripture prophecies respecting those mighty cities, that were once the seats of empire, or the principal scenes of commerce, wealth, and grandeur, deserve attention. Such cities were Nineveh, Babylon, and Tyre. The two former the capitals of powerful empires, the latter that city whose merchants were princes. Nahum foretold the destruction of Nineveh; and Nineveh has long since been swept from the earth by the besom of destruction. Isaiah pronounced the doom of Babylon, and threatened with ruin that proud and haughty city; a heathen has recorded the fulfilment of the just, divine sentence. Tyre, once their rival in wealth, has partaken of their fall, and shared in their ruin. These prophecies are rendered more remarkable in consequence of the scriptures specifying various minute circumstances connected with their downfall, and yet containing no account of the fulfilment of the prophecy, at which a writer, designing to recommend himself to notice as a prophet, would at least have glanced. From other writers we learn their fulfilment. Diodorus Siculus, a heathen historian, states that Nineveh

was sixty miles in compass. Nahum foretold that this city should be taken when the Assyrians were drunken, that the gates of the river should be opened, and the palace be dissolved, Nahum i. 10. ii. 6. Diodorus states, that the Assyrian camp was forced, and the army defeated, when drunkenness and negligence prevailed; that the river broke down the wall for twenty furlongs; and that then the king, believing ruin at hand, built a funeral pile in his palace, and consumed together, his wealth, his concubines, his palace, and himself. Babylon was a city that might have appeared to defy the enmity of man. Herodotus states, that its walls were 350 feet high, and 87 thick, that it had a hundred gates of solid brass, and was about the size of Nineveh; and Berosus adds, that some of its buildings appeared almost like mountains. It had stood for many centuries when Isaiah foretold its destruction. He prophesied that it should be overthrown by Cyrus, and the Medes and Persians, Isa. xxi. 2, xlv. 28, xiv. 1, Jer. ii. 11. That its gates should not be shut, Isa. xlv. 1. That its waters should be dried up, Isa. xlv. 27, Jer. l. 38. That it should be taken when its great men were drunken at a feast, Jer. li. 39. 51. 57. From the historians Xenophon and Herodotus we learn that this was literally accomplished. The Medes and Persians under Cyrus were the conquerors of Babylon. Its gates towards the Euphrates were left open, and he took the city by turning the course of the river, there a quarter of a mile wide, and then entering the neglected gates through the dried channel, on a night when the inhabitants, in consequence of an annual festival, were indulging in dancing, revelling, and drinking. Isaiah threatened its utter destruction, and this has been so fulfilled that it has long been a subject of dispute where Babylon stood. Tyre was a city not

less memorable, and mentioned as a strong city in the book of Joshua. Ezekiel foretold its ruin, and various circumstances connected with its fate; and ancient history records the fulfilment of his predictions. Among other circumstances mentioned in those predictions, it is said, "I will make thee like the top of a rock; thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more," Ezek. xxvi. 14. Mr. Maundrel mentions that its modern inhabitants are a few poor creatures who have been born in its vaults, and subsist on fishing; and a person who resided ten years in Syria stated, that, upon the stones scattered up and down its now desolated shore, he beheld the fishermen's nets spread out to dry.

5. The predictions contained in the Old Testament respecting the Lord Jesus Christ deserve the devout attention of all his professed disciples. The volume of prophecy was unsealed in paradise, when the first promise of a Deliverer was given to man, and gradually opened, displaying more and more of the excellences of him that was to come. The accomplishment of some of these predictions may not, however, to a person who doubts the divine origin of Christianity, appear so conclusive and impressive, as that of others that may be seen fulfilled, and fulfilling before our eyes. To these, therefore, references shall here be *principally* made.

Let it be premised, and let the reader keep in mind, that the Old Testament, in which the predictions now to be brought forward are found, is a completely distinct volume from the New. It is handed down to us from a different source, not originally from the disciples of Jesus, but from the Jews, his inveterate enemies. It has ever been in their keeping, and still is preserved by them, wherever scattered, as the book of God; and

preserved with a scrupulosity, that has led them to number the words and even the letters it contains. No one, therefore, unless he would outdo all that is most absurd in absurdity, can hazard the assertion, that the predictions of that book were forged by *Christians*, that their pretended accomplishment might give a sanction to Christianity; for as the book containing them always has been in the hands of the enemies of Christianity, this was *utterly impossible*.

The Old Testament contains predictions that at some period of time a great benefactor to the human race should arise. In him all nations were sooner or later to be blessed.

Among the predictions announcing this event are the following. God said to Abraham, "In *thy* seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," Gen. xxii. 18.

"My covenant will I establish with *Isaac*," Gen. xvii. 21.

To Jacob he said, "In thee and in *thy* seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed," Gen. xxviii. 14.

Other predictions are—"The sceptre shall not depart from *Judah*—till Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be," Gen. xlix. 10.

"There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of *Jesse*, and a branch shall grow out of his roots, and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him," Isa. xi. 1, 2.

"Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto *David* a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth," Jer. xxiii. 5.

"Thou, *Bethlehem Ephratah*, though thou be little among the thousands of *Judah*, yet out of *thee* shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting," Mic. v. 2.

“He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him,” Isa. liii. 2.

“Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth,” Isa. xlii. 1—3.

“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert,” Isa. xxxv. 5, 6.

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted,” Isa. liii. 3, 4.

“He hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors,” Isa. liii. 12.

“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth,” Isa. liii. 7.

“And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth,” Isa. liii. 9.

“The desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill *this house* with glory, saith the Lord,” Hag. ii. 7.

“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself,” Dan. ix. 24. 26.

Thus it was foretold, that the promised benefactor of the human race should be a descendant of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Judah, of Jesse, of David—that he should be born at Bethlehem; that he should rise in the midst of poverty and depression; that he should be distinguished by meekness and gentleness; should perform the most illustrious miracles; should be rejected by those he attempted to benefit; should intercede for transgressors; should without complaining be put to death; should make his grave with the rich; and should appear while the second temple stood, and before Daniel’s seventy weeks expired. However the enemies of Jesus may account for the fact, they cannot disprove that all these particulars met in him. Tacitus, Suetonius, and Josephus record, that about the time of his coming, some great personage was expected to arise in the East. The genealogy of the Lord’s human ancestors, tracing his descent to David, to Jesse, to Judah, to Jacob, to Isaac, to Abraham, was published by his disciples among their foes; if incorrect why did not the Jews who crucified him disprove it, when their genealogies existed, and they had every opportunity for detecting falsehood? His birth at Bethlehem was a notorious fact; that he was poor and despised none denied; it was the subject of their reproach. If he were not, as his friends declare, distinguished for meekness and gentleness, why did not his enemies detect a falsehood respecting him? That

he performed the most illustrious miracles has been already evinced; that he was rejected needs no proof. The other circumstances connected with his death were of so public a nature, that if the narration of his disciples had been incorrect, his enemies might immediately have exposed their false representation. He appeared while that which Josephus expressly represents as the *second* temple stood; and at whatever year Daniel's seventy weeks of years, (or 490 years,) may be reckoned to commence, he came before that period had expired. Look through all history, and see if it be possible to fix on another person in whom these predictions, which are but a few out of the many that refer to the Messiah, meet. It is impossible to find one. How then COULD they meet in him but because he was the person to whom they pointed? Whatever human sagacity may do, it cannot with certainty foretell *one* future event, much less can it trace, through successive generations, the descent of an individual, not to be born for many ages; describe his character, and point to a number of circumstances in his life. Yet this is done, in the Old Testament, respecting some distinguished individual; and there is abundant evidence that Jesus Christ is that individual, and thus is the Son of God.

6. The prophecies respecting the reign of that great Benefactor, of whom the Old Testament makes such frequent mention, and who is denominated the Messiah, are not less remarkable, than those which refer to his person; and have this *peculiarity* that the *accomplishment of them is evident before our eyes*. This no sophistry can confute, no effrontery disprove.

The Jews, it is well known, were a nation peculiarly distinct from other nations. They were influenced by a spirit entirely sectarian. Other nations despised them,

and they on their part, despised other nations, looked on them as common, and unclean, and on themselves as the peculiar people of the God of heaven. Yet when the whole world, excepting Judea, lay sunk in idolatry, when Greece and Rome, with all their refinements, were worshipping their thousand idols, or even before Grecian and Roman grandeur and civilization existed, *Jewish* prophets foretold that other nations would forsake their idols; would become the worshippers of the God the Jews adored; would be gathered into his fold; and that his fold among them would be more extensive, and more favoured than ever was that of the Jewish nation. The predictions are in the hands of the Jews; the accomplishment is not mere matter of history—it is before you: read the predictions.

“In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths,” Mic. iv. 1, 2.

“Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders,” Isa. xlix. 14, 15, 22.

“Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee

because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee," Isa. lv. 5.

"Hearken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people," Isa. li. 4.

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee," Isa. lx. 1—5.

"I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name," Isa. lxxv. 1.

"O Lord, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit," Jer. xvi. 19.

"I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God," Hos. ii. 23.

"Many nations shall be joined to the Lord," Zech. ii. 11.

“From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts,” Mal. i. 11.

“Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for *more* are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited,” Isa. liv. 1—3.

Behold before you the accomplishment of these predictions. Look at Europe; its systems of idolatry have long since passed away; its idols are forgotten. Millions, indeed, are careless of all religion, but by millions the Bible is revered; the book that instructed the Jews three thousand years ago, instructs them; and the God that was adored by the prophet who uttered the predictions, is the God they worship. Look at their numbers, how much more numerous are the Gentiles who have renounced idolatry and worship God, than the decendants of Abraham ever were!

7. As it was predicted that the Gentiles would become worshippers of God, so it was also predicted that they would become the subjects of the promised Messiah. This was an additional event. Idolatry might have been renounced without Christianity being embraced; but Christ was to be their light, or to communicate to them the knowledge of sacred truth; that light was to spring up in Jerusalem, and thence to be

diffused to other lands. To the promised Deliverer, it was also foretold, the Gentiles would seek, and to him submit. Among many predictions on these subjects are the following: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession," *Psa. ii. 6. 8.* "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and I will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles," *Isa. xlii. 1. 6.* "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Isreal: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth," *Isa. xlix. 6.* "Behold I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people," *Isa. lv. 4.* "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious," *Isa. xi. 10.* "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people," *Isa. ii. 3. 4.* "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is the Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both," *Zech. vi. 12, 13.* "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man

came with the clouds of Heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed," Dan. vii. 13, 14.

Whether you love or reject Christianity, can you possibly deny the accomplishment of these predictions? The accomplishment is full and clear as the light of day. It comes to a matter-of-fact question, Have the events foretold taken place or have they not? Have the idolatrous systems that once governed Europe, and some other lands, vanished away? They have. This none deny. What exterminated them? Science, philosophy? No, not in a single village. It was the light of Christianity fulfilling the prediction, "I have set Thee for a light to the Gentiles." Where did the light of Christianity arise? Not at Rome, not at Athens, the seats of ancient refinement and science; but, as prophecy predicted, at *Jerusalem*. To whom have the nations, that have thus been brought to worship the God of heaven, instead of the idols of their ancestors, sought? To whom have they professed subjection? and though, alas, with respect to multitudes, that profession has been mere profession, yet to whom have the truly devout in those various nations actually yielded the *subjection of the heart*? To Jesus Christ. They have professed his religion, they have borne his name, they have submitted to his laws. Millions have suffered every extremity of affliction rather than renounce allegiance to him; and millions more have, doubtless, been actuated by the same spirit, though not actually summoned to the same sufferings.

8. The great Benefactor, whose appearance the

prophets predicted, was to be a blessing to the nations. This is expressed at times in plain words, and at other times by the most glowing poetical images. "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," Gen. xxii. 18. "Men shall be blessed in him, all nations shall call him blessed," Psa. lxxii. 17. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God," Isa. xxxv. 1, 2. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," Isa. xi. 6—9. "For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody," Isa. li. 3. "And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more," Isa. ii. 4. The reader may further peruse all the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah.

The Lord Jesus Christ and his religion has been a

blessing to the nations. The enlightened Christian will ever esteem the spiritual good which the gospel communicates as its most important good ; yet, independent of that, the religion of the Lord Jesus has been a blessing to mankind. Paley remarks, with not more perspicuity than truth, "The effects of Christianity have been important. It has mitigated the conduct of war, and the treatment of captives. It has softened the administration of despotic or of nominally despotic governments. It has abolished polygamy. It has restrained the licentiousness of divorces. It has put an end to the exposure of children, and the immolation of slaves. It has suppressed the combats of gladiators,* and the impurities of religious rites. It has banished if not unnatural vices, at least the toleration of them. It has greatly meliorated the condition of the laborious part, that is to say, of the mass of every community, by procuring for them a day of weekly rest. In all countries in which it is professed, it has produced numerous establishments for the relief of sickness and poverty ; and in some a regular and general provision by law. It has triumphed over the slavery established in the Roman empire : it is contending, and, I trust, will one day prevail against the worse slavery of the West Indies."

Had any distinguished patriot effected all this, how would he have been held up to universal admiration as the greatest benefactor of mankind ! All this Christianity has done ; yet this is but a small part of what it has effected. Its best effects are visible in the holiness and happiness diffused among many in the retired scenes of private life ; in the peace that cheers thousands of chambers of affliction, and the hope that ani-

^a Lipsius affirms that these shows sometimes cost 20,000 or 30,000 lives in a month ; and women as well as men were passionately fond of them.

mates myriads when sinking into the grave. It is freely acknowledged that the *whole* language of prophecy, on the blessings of Christ's reign, has not *yet* been accomplished; but then it is to be recollected, the *full* accomplishment *is represented* as taking place when the knowledge of the Lord *shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea*; then, and not till then, may be expected the complete fulfilment of the prophecies respecting Messiah's reign. To expect that the world should enjoy *all* the blessings of his reign while but a part of that world is subjected to his sway, would be as absurd as to expect a harvest from the *whole* of a field of which but a *part* was cultivated.

9. The prophets of the Old Testament also predicted, that the kingdom which was thus to be established under Him whom they represented as the great hope and deliverer of the human race, was to be an everlasting kingdom. The period of time in which it was to commence was marked out; that mere human power was not to establish it, was distinctly asserted; and that its duration was to be for ever. "In the days of those kings (the Roman empire) shall the *God of Heaven* set up a kingdom which shall *never* be *destroyed*; and it shall stand for ever," Dan. ii. 44. The stone mentioned in verse 34, which represents this kingdom, is described as cut out without hands, that is, established by *divine* not human power, as the phrase "not made with hands" is used 2 Cor. v. 1. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from hence-

forth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this," Isa. ix. 6, 7. "His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed," Dan. vii. 14. "His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in Heaven," Psal. lxxxix. 36, 37. "His name shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed," Psal. lxxii. 17. "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord," Isa. liv. 8. 10. 17.

In the establishment and preservation of Christianity we see all this fulfilled. During the time of the fourth great empire, or of the Roman power, this kingdom arose. It was not established by human power; the power and riches of the world were long united for its destruction. Nor was it raised by the science or wealth of its first members. The unlettered fishermen of Galilee had neither wealth nor science. But God declared he would set up the kingdom, and by miracles and miraculous gifts, and displays of divine power, he accomplished his promise. For eighteen hundred years has Christianity existed. You see it before you, a standing monument of the truth of the prophe-

cies, which declared its rise and its imperishable nature. The spiritual kingdom of Christ exists and flourishes, notwithstanding all the exertions that, through successive ages, thousands of enemies have employed to effect its subversion. For three hundred years it was exposed to the assaults of heathen persecutors, yet prospered in the midst of opposition, till heathenism itself fell before its power. For many hundred years more, the superstitions and persecutions of the Romish antichrist aimed at Christianity a more deadly wound, but, though depressed, the kingdom, the church of Christ, still existed. In later times, Infidelity has assaulted Christianity with unremitting hostility, and employed every art and every weapon for its destruction, till at one time, as is well known, French infidels anticipated a final conquest. And does Christianity now seem less likely to prevail than in ages past? Does the kingdom of Christ seem tottering to decay? Let facts answer. Look at North America. Behold among its energetic population, millions binding the Gospel to their hearts, and intent on the enlargement of Christ's spiritual kingdom. Look at Britian, and though there is much of merely nominal Christianity here, yet, behold a multitude, which no man can number, to whom Christianity is dearer than any earthly good, and who are labouring to promote its reign, not merely in their own country, but to the uttermost parts of the earth. Look at Europe, and see not merely many devoted to Christ, but see Bible societies spreading the Christian Scriptures over various parts of the continent, and even diffusing them from houses or from cities where infidelity once held its reign, and feared no overthrow. Look at the efforts now making to spread Christianity through the world, so that missionaries, bibles, and tracts are gone, or going, to almost every nation; while,

probably, not less than five hundred thousand pounds are annually expended in these sacred enterprises.—Let all this answer the question, Is Christianity losing or gaining ground?

10. The question now is, not whether these things are right or wrong, though among Christians, on that subject, there can be but one opinion, but it is, Are these things facts? facts visible to every eye?—If they are, in this is prophecy accomplished before our view; and predictions, uttered more than two thousand years ago, are fulfilled in our sight. Whether you approve of Christianity or dislike it, the appeal now is to matter of fact. It is a fact that the Jewish prophets did foretell the advent of some extraordinary person, who was to be an eminent benefactor to mankind. The Jews, the enemies of Christ, are our witnesses to this. It is an equally indisputable fact, that at the time expected, Jesus Christ professed to be that person; and that many circumstances connected with him exactly agreed with those predictions. It is a fact, that the Jewish prophets predicted the conversion of Gentile nations from idolatry to the worship of the one living and true God. It is equally a fact, that that event has taken place. It is a fact that those Jewish prophets also predicted, that the nations thus converted from idolatry, would be so, through the religion of the great Deliverer, of whom they spoke; and that those nations would avow subjection to him. It is equally a fact, that it is Christianity which subverted Grecian and Roman idolatry, and that the nations rescued from such superstition, have avowed themselves the subjects of Christ. It is a fact that the prophets foretold, that his kingdom once established, should never be destroyed, and it is an equally obvious fact, that in spite of every effort used for its subversion, Christianity exists; that multitudes

glory in it; bow to Christ in willing subjection, and yield to him the homage of adoring and devoted hearts. These are facts, which cannot, with any appearance of reason be denied. How, then, were all these facts foretold, some of them much more than three thousand years ago, all of them considerably more than two thousand; how, except from the inspiration of that God, to whom Christianity directs the soul? Nothing parallel to this, excepting in other prophecies of the Bible, is to be found in the history of the human race. We possess many ancient writings, whose authors have long been held in high esteem, but these writings contain no predictions of events to take place thousands of years after the writer's death. We behold many events of considerable importance taking place, amidst the agitations of this world, but we can look to no ancient record, and say, These momentous events are here foretold. Only where the kingdom, the cause, and the Book of God are concerned, can we find such predictions uttered, and thus trace their fulfilment.

Should an unbeliever say, These predictions were but lucky conjectures of the prophets; the supposition is entirely absurd. Previous to the coming of Christ, not *one* instance can be pointed out in which an idolatrous nation had voluntarily renounced idolatry. Nation after nation had been sinking deeper and deeper in that foolish superstition, but none forsaking its abominations. There was nothing, therefore, in all history, or in the whole appearance of the world to lead a prophet to suspect, that *many* nations would forsake idolatry. But if a conjecture of this kind had been ventured as a prediction, yet to point out that this renunciation of idolatry should take place, in connection with the authority and instructions of an individual, not to be born for many ages; that this indi-

vidual should be a blessing to the nations; and that his dominion once established should defy every effort to effect its subversion, was indeed an utter impossibility. A sensible writer has drawn out various opinions of deists in what he describes as the deist's *creed*, of which the conclusion is, "Finally I believe in all unbelief;" and he who can believe, that such a *series* of predictions closely connected with each other, and all *visibly* accomplished, were but the lucky conjectures of impostors, may to, "I believe in all unbelief," add, I believe every absurdity to be reasonable, and every impossibility easy.

11. The predictions of our Lord and his apostles have been accomplished in as wonderful a manner as those of the former prophets. Some of the prophecies of the Lord Jesus referred to his disciples, others to his enemies. To his friends he said, "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake;" and told them that parents would become enemies to their children, and children to their parents, on account of his religion, and that a man's foes should be those of his own household. How harmless is a name, yet in after ages the name of Christian was sufficient to ensure martyrdom to multitudes who bore it. No reader of ecclesiastical history can be ignorant of this fact. Tertullian, in his *Apology*,* observes: "If a Christian is accused of no crime, the name surely must be of a strange nature to be criminal in itself;" he adds, "Some are arrived to that pitch of aversion to the very name of Christian, that they seem to have entered into covenant with hatred, and bargained to gratify this passion at the expense of all the satisfactions of human life, acquiescing in the grossest of injuries, rather than the hated thing of Christian should come within their doors.

* Tertullian's *Apology*, c. iii. The apology was probably written about A. D. 200.

The husband, now cured of all his former jealousy by his wife's conversion to Christianity, turns her and her new modesty out of doors together, choosing to dwell with an adulteress sooner than a Christian : the father, so tender of the undutiful son in his Gentile state, disinherits him now, when he becomes obedient by becoming a Christian : the master, heretofore so good to his unfaithful slave, discards him now upon his fidelity and his religion. So that the husband had rather have his wife false, the father his son a rebel, the master his servant a rogue, than Christians and good : so much is the hatred of our name, above all the advantages of virtue flowing from it.

“Now, therefore, if all this odium arises purely on account of our name, tell me how a poor name comes to be thus to blame, or a simple word to be a criminal. Before we give entertainment to hatred against any sect, whatever, upon account of its name, we ought in the first place to examine the nature of the institution, and trace out its qualities from the author, or the author from them ; but both these ways of inquiry are quite neglected ; and our enemies storm and fire at a word only. Our heavenly Master, and his heavenly religion, are both unknown, and both condemned, without any other consideration, but that of the bare name of Christian.”

Our divine Lord also forewarned his disciples that they might expect all manner of evil to be said against them falsely for his name's sake. This too received a dreadful accomplishment. The basest lies that hell itself could invent were circulated respecting the primitive disciples. They were said to indulge even in their religious assemblies in lewdness and incest, and abominations too dark to be named ; to worship the head of an ass, and to initiate fresh converts at a meal, when

they murdered an infant, and licked up his blood.* What but the spirit of Prophecy enabled the blessed Jesus thus to predict the treatment his disciples were to experience for ages after his departure from the world! Would an impostor have uttered such predictions? Would he have said, All men shall hate you, scandalize you, persecute you, and think they do God service when they kill you on my account? This is not the encouragement that impostors hold out to their disciples.

12. With respect to his enemies, our Lord's prophecies were not less express. He foretold that many false prophets should arise and deceive many; that there should be wars and rumours of wars; famines, pestilences, earthquakes; that the abomination of desolation should stand in the holy place; the eagles be gathered where the carcase was; the time for these things be a period of the greatest tribulation, Mat. xxiv.; that Jerusalem should be compassed with armies; that signs in Heaven should precede its destruction; that of the temple, one stone should not be left upon another; that the Jews should fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. The holy scriptures contain these prophecies, but not the slightest allusion to their accomplishment. The account of the fulfilment of these predictions is furnished by Tacitus, Josephus, &c. From the latter we learn, that various impostors, professing to be the Christ or Messiah arose, who deluded multitudes; that famines, insurrections, wars and rumours of wars, earthquakes, and pestilence, afflicted Judea or the neighbouring parts. Owing to a solemn festival, the carcase, or body of the Jewish nation,

* See Tertullian, Minucius Felix, &c.

was at Jerusalem, when that guilty city was surrounded by the Roman armies; these bore the eagle as their standard; and thus fulfilled the prediction: Where the carcase is, there shall the eagles be gathered together. While the Romans besieged the city, famine and pestilence made horrible ravages among its inhabitants. Eleven hundred thousand persons were destroyed by these or by the sword, and the city was taken. Ninety-seven thousand captives were taken during the war, some of whom were sent to the works in Egypt; and others distributed as presents through the Roman provinces, to perish by the sword, or wild beasts in their theatres. Titus wished to preserve the temple, but in vain, for he could not restrain the fury of his own soldiers. Not one of its stones was left upon another. The Romans destroyed the houses, and dug up the walls. So that Josephus introduces a Jew as saying, Where is our great city? It is altogether rooted up, and torn up from its foundations. Josephus also mentions fearful sights and signs that occurred, and in his history gives an awful and affecting testimony to the truth of our Lord's predictions, though such was by no means his design. One of the Lord's predictions respecting the Jews is at this day receiving its fulfilment. Though nearly eighteen hundred years have elapsed since the destruction of Jerusalem, it has never been restored to its former owners. It is still trodden down by the Gentiles.*

13. The New Testament contains predictions respecting many other events, some of which are fulfilled, others are fulfilling, and others wait for their accomplishment in a future age. Among the most remark-

* For a highly interesting account of the accomplishment of these, and all the other scripture Prophecies alluded to in this section, see Newton on the Prophecies.

able of these, are the prophecies relating to the Roman catholic church. Who that beheld the firmness, the labours, the piety of the first Christians, could have imagined that such a total defection from the faith as afterwards existed, would take place among the professors of the Gospel? Yet, at that very time, the apostles foretold a dreadful and general apostasy.

The apostle Paul prophesied of this apostasy, or falling away; and that the man of sin should be revealed, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God; whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4. 9. Speaking of the same apostasy, in another epistle, he adds, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, (or doctrines concerning demons,) speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats," &c. 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 3.

These predictions were awfully accomplished in the Romish church. Yet, while tracing their accomplishment, the writer by no means designs to insinuate that modern adherents to the Romish church are *universally* actuated by the spirit, and maintain the tenets of their forefathers. The statements that follow are designed as illustrations of the accomplishment of prophecy, principally in the spirit and conduct of Romanists in past ages. Among the Roman catholics of the present day there are many men of honourable and liberal principles; yet it is still evident, that some men who struggle for civil freedom refuse to grant that which is religious. The apostasy predicted by the apostle

Paul spread over the greater part of the Christian world. The man of sin, or the popes in succession, sat in the temple or church of God, as an infallible ruler, annulling even the decrees of the Most High, altering his ordinances, and forbidding to the people generally the use of his word. To the popes also have been impiously applied the very names and attributes of God. He has been styled, "Our Lord God the pope; another God upon earth; King of kings, and Lord of lords. The same is the dominion of God and the pope. To believe that our Lord God the pope might not decree as he decreed, it were a matter of heresy. The power of the pope is greater than all created power, and extends itself to things celestial, terrestrial, and infernal. The pope doeth whatsoever he listeth, even things infernal, and is more than God."* Does the apostle foretell the signs and lying wonders of the anti-Christian power? It is a notorious fact that the church of Rome has been supported by various impostures, and feigned miracles or lying wonders, which are professedly wrought even to the present time; as the liquefying once a year of the blood of St. Januarius at Naples, &c. Does the apostle mention *their giving heed to doctrines of devils*? (or, perhaps, more properly about demons.) This has been fulfilled by the idolatrous worship of images and saints in the Romish church; for demons, the original word, was not always, by the ancients, taken in the sense of devils, but meant beings of a middle class between God and men. *Speaking lies in hypocrisy*.—This has been fulfilled in the pious, or rather impious frauds of the Roman church, and in their well-known tenet that no faith was to be kept with heretics—which, though doubtless rejected and abhorred by many Roman catholics now, was too often

* See Newton on the Prophecies, Dissertation XXII.

acted upon in darker ages. By them the professors of the Gospel were, in many instances, treacherously beguiled and afterwards destroyed. *Forbidding to marry.*—God says marriage is honourable in all. The Romish church forbids it to all its priests; and evidently would sooner connive at their cohabiting with concubines, than allow them to marry virtuous women; multitudes of their priests have done this, and the popes themselves have been fathers of illegitimate sons and daughters whom they have termed nephews and nieces. *Commanding to abstain from meats.*—This is another well-known part of the popish system. On certain days, or certain parts of the year, the use of meat is forbidden, and by a *thorough* catholic, in some countries, on such a day it would be esteemed a greater sin to eat flesh, than to murder his protestant neighbour. In the Revelation, the apostle John speaks fully of the same power, which he represents as drunk with the blood of the martyrs. The persecutions which true Christians have endured from the Romish church are well known. Millions have been martyred. Some suppose that not less than fifty millions of persons have in different ways fallen victims to the persecuting spirit of the church of Rome; certainly the number has been exceedingly great. Among other particulars respecting the sufferings of some of these victims, it was foretold that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark of the beast. History informs us that edicts were published at different times, forbidding any traffic, any *selling* or buying to take place with the Waldenses and Albigenes, those early witnesses for the truth. Amidst all the corruptions thus foretold, and the sufferings which the professors of the truth were to undergo, it was still declared that the church of Christ should preserve its existence, though in a state of depression and deep dis-

treachery. This too has been accomplished. When popery commanded the wealth and power of the world, and hesitated not to murder its millions, still it could not utterly root out the church of Jesus. It massacred multitudes, but others still arose; if exterminated in one place, they appeared in another. At length popery, after triumphing for eight or ten centuries, received, at the Reformation, a wound which has never been healed. And the efforts now making to circulate the Scriptures, and preach the Gospel to every nation, furnish reason for believing that the period is approaching when Christianity shall become the religion of the world, and all superstitious systems be destroyed by the brightness of the Redeemer's coming, in the universal diffusion and complete triumph of his Gospel.

Whence but from heaven did all these prophecies descend? No book upon earth except the Bible, contains such a series of predictions, whose truth has been manifested by their literal accomplishment. Whence had the writers this knowledge of futurity? It could be given them by none but God; and the accomplishment of so many remarkable prophecies, of which those respecting the Arabs, the Jews, the conversion of the Gentiles, and the Romish church are at this time fulfilling before our eyes, decisively proves that the prophets of the Old Testament, and the Lord Jesus and his apostles were the inspired messengers of the Most High.*

* The remarks in sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 11, 12, 13, of this chapter, are extracted from Newton on the Prophecies, to which the reader is recommended, for a full and interesting illustration of the important subject of Prophecy. What is here attempted is a brief and very imperfect view, yet, brief and imperfect as it is, the writer introduces it from a persuasion that it may instruct and edify some who have not access to larger works. See, for some further illustrations of the fulfilment of Prophecy, Keith's Evidence of Prophecy, published by the Religious Tract Society.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PRACTICAL TENDENCY OF CHRISTIANITY, AN INFALLIBLE PROOF OF ITS DIVINE ORIGIN.

1. A VERY strong, indeed an overwhelming, proof of the divinity of Christianity springs from its holy and benevolent nature. The more any person imbibes the spirit of the Gospel, the more deeply will the force of this argument be felt.

Were a skilful artist invited to form a judgment respecting some complicated piece of machinery ; were he, for that purpose, to enter a silk-mill, and, instead of finding the whole machine in action, to find but a small part of it at work, he would not estimate the value of the machine from what he saw it performing, but from what he would perceive it designed and fitted to perform. The principle on which the artist in this case would form his judgment, is a principle carried into the most important concerns of human life. In a court of justice how much is attributed to design ! Is a man arraigned as a murderer, for slaying his fellow man, if it be proved that he had no design to kill, what jury would convict him ? Has another set fire to a house, and the flames spread and burnt down a town ? if it be proved that he did it accidentally, and without design, he is esteemed an innocent man. On the other hand, has a man assaulted his neighbour, and really done him little injury, but designed to kill him ? this man, if an intention to kill is fully proved at the bar of justice, is in the eye of the law a murderer, and as a murderer must he suffer. The same principle acts with all its force in a thousand other instances. Has a friend greatly injured me, yet am I convinced he truly designed as much good as he has done harm ? I should think of his design, and not love him less than

before. Has another bestowed some great benefit on me, yet am I convinced he meant me no kindness? In that case I should feel no gratitude, for I should think of his design. Now let us bring Christianity to trial upon this principle. Let us inquire, not what it has done, though on this much might be said, but what it appears designed and fitted to do. This is the only way of forming a fair judgment respecting its claims. We cannot possibly form a just estimate of Christianity, by viewing a world of which the greater part are strangers to its influence; nor by surveying the conduct of those, who though termed Christians, really refuse to imbibe its dispositions, to submit to its precepts, and to follow its directions. Were wolves to assume the name of lambs, we could not judge of the disposition of a lamb, by looking at a wolf. We cannot, it may be added, form a just estimate of Christianity, even by contemplating it as displayed in its most sincere disciples, for they are the first to acknowledge that they fall far short of what their religion demands; that their piety is, as it were, in a weak and sickly state. Who that wished to paint a just likeness of the human form, would go to an hospital, and draw the picture of sufferers that had lost a leg or an arm; or who were withered with the palsy, or burnt with fever, or wasted away by consumption? Christianity is professedly designed as a religion for all mankind. Now, as to form a just opinion respecting the nature and powers of man, we must see him in health; so to know what Christianity is, we must consider what is its design, and what would be its effects, if all the world were subjected to its influence, and every human being fully under its power. We now see a few parts of the Christian machine in action. To see it all in motion, we must behold it reigning with a sovereign sway in

every human heart. For this it is designed; but this we cannot see: yet we may form a fair estimate of its nature, by considering what would be the effects were it thus brought into full and universal action. No other estimate of Christianity can be fair and impartial. For if we survey human corruptions, these do not spring from Christianity, it forbids all corruption. If we survey the defects of sincere Christians, these are not caused by the religion they have, but by the want of more: they spring from the evil, which Christianity is designed to correct.

2. In taking a view of the nature of Christianity, we may first glance at its account of that adorable Being from whom it professes to have derived its origin.

“God is a spirit,” John iv. 24. “The God of glory,” Acts vii. 2. “The living God who made heaven and earth,” Acts xiv. 15. “He giveth to all, life and breath, and all things,” Acts xvii. 25. “He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good; and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust also,” Matt. v. 45. “Is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords,” 1 Tim. vi. 15. “The King eternal, immortal, invisible,” 1 Tim. i. 17. “Who only hath immortality dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto,” 1 Tim. vi. 16. “Heaven is his throne, and the earth his footstool,” Acts vii. 49. “He is the Lord God Almighty,” Rev. iv. 8. “Who trieth our hearts,” 1 Thess. ii. 4. “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him, with whom we have to do,” Heb. iv. 13. He is our Father. A “heavenly Father who seeth in secret,” Matt. vi. 1. 14. “God the only wise,” Rom. xvi. 27. “Who cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man,” Jam. i. 13. “There is none good but God,”

Mark x. 18. "He only is holy ; just and true are his ways," Rev. xv. 3, 4. "He is the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort," 2 Cor. i. 3. "God who is rich in mercy," Eph. ii. 4. "And long-suffering toward us," 2 Pet. iii. 15. "He is the God of all grace," 1 Pet. v. 10. "Who giveth unto all men liberally, and upbraideth not," Jam. i. 5. "He feedeth the fowls of the air ; and clothes the herb of the field in beauty ; and knows that his children have need of raiment and of food," Matt. vi. 32. "Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; which neither have storehouse, nor barn, and God feedeth them," Matt. vi. 26 ; Luke xii. 24. Or "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow ; they toil not, they spin not ; yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these," Matt. vi. 28 ; Luke xii. 27. "He is a faithful Creator," 1 Pet. iv. 19. "The Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," Jam. i. 17. "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God," Rom. xiv. 12. "He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness," Acts xvii. 31. "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ," Rom. ii. 16. "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things : to whom be glory for ever. Amen." Rom. xi. 36.

Thus it is the doctrine of the Christian system, that in God every perfection meets ; that from Him we derive our being ; that all our mercies flow from his bounty ; that to him we are accountable for our conduct here ; and that hereafter we shall in his favour find eternal life, or in his anger eternal death.

3. In considering the design of Christianity, we may view it as designed to repress evil, and to produce good. In viewing it as designed to repress evil, we

may observe, there is no sin which it sanctions ; no vice, whose extirpation it does not attempt. "God now commandeth all men every where to repent," Acts xvii. 30. "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity," 2 Tim. ii. 19. "Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul," 1 Pet. ii. 11. "Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves frim all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit," 2 Cor. vii. 1. "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these ; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. Of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in times past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God," Gal. v. 19—21. "Put ye off the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lust ; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind," Eph. iv. 22. "Fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not once be named among you, as becometh saints. Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God," Eph. v. 3—5. "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess," Eph. v. 18. "Let him that stole steal no more," Eph. iv. 28. "Let no man go beyond, and defraud his brother in any matter," 1 Thess. iv. 6. "Owe no man any thing," Rom. xiii. 8. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth. Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God," Eph. iv. 29, 30. "Lie not one to another, seeing that you have put off the old man with his deeds," Col. iii. 9. "Swear not at all ; but let your communication be yea, yea ; nay, nay ; for whatsoever is more

than this cometh of evil," Matt. v. 34. 37. "Bless and curse not," Rom. xii. 14. "He that will love life let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile," 1 Pet. iii. 10. "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; it defileth the whole body; and setteth on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell; it is an unruly evil full of deadly poison. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing; my brethren, these things ought not so to be," Jam. iii. 6. 8. 10. "Speak evil of no man," Tit. iii. 2. "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice," Eph. iv. 26. 31. "Laying aside all malice and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, desire the sincere milk of the word," 1 Pet. ii. 1. "Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath," Rom. xii. 19. "Not rendering evil for evil; or railing for railing," 1 Pet. iii. 9. "Be not overcome of evil; but overcome evil with good," Rom. xii. 21. "God resisteth the proud," Jam. iv. 6. "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation," Matt. xxvi. 41.

Not only do the sacred writers thus forbid the crimes to which man is so prone, but they denounce tremendous wrath against the criminal. They declare that no one can be a child of God, who does not renounce sin; and they call on the disciples of Jesus not merely to renounce, but to hate iniquity. "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness," Eph. v. 11. "Abstain from all appearance of evil," 1 Thess. v. 22. "Abhor that which is evil," Rom. xii. 9. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; by their fruits ye shall know them," Matt. vii. 18. 20. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we

have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth," 1 John i. 5, 6. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him," 1 John ii. 4. "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. Whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God," 1 John iii. 10. "Not every one that saith to me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven," Matt. vii. 21. "The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. vi. 9. "There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth," Rev. xxi. 27. "God will render to every man according to his deeds: unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath; tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile," Rom. ii. 6, 8, 9. The fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death," Rev. xxi. 8.

4. The precepts given by the Lord Jesus and his apostles, not merely forbid all sin, but inculcate holiness of the most exalted kind; and represent the motives for this holiness of a nature as exalted. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and spirit which are God's," 1 Cor. vi. 20. "Your bodies are the members of Christ," 1 Cor. vi. 15. "Ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you," 1 Cor. iii. 16. "We walk by faith not by sight," 2 Cor. v. 7. "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are

temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal," 2 Cor. iv. 18.

The Scriptures represent real Christians as those who live to God. "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's," Rom. xiv. 7, 8. In the example of Christ, as represented in his word, a pattern of pure and spotless excellence is presented to our view; and this example his followers are directed to copy. "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps," 1 Pet. ii. 21. The scriptures declare that love to God is the first and great commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength," Matt. xxii. 37; Luke x. 27, and represent the Saviour as having performed such a work, as entitles him to the most fervent affection of the heart. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me," Matt. x. 37. Yet if called to this trial the Christian has a source of joy: "Rejoice in the Lord always," Phil. iv. 4.

On all the subjects most connected with the welfare of man, the New Testament furnishes important instruction.

"Be careful (anxious) for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God," Phil. iv. 6. "Pray without ceasing; in every thing give thanks," 1 Thess. v. 17, 18. "Be ye thankful," Col. iii. 15. "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet,

and shut thy door, and pray to thy Father, who is in secret; and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly," Matt. vi. 6.

Connected with a devotional is a humble spirit. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," Matt. v. 3. "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits," Rom. xii. 16. "All of you be clothed with humility," 1 Pet. v. 5. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ. Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation," Phil. ii. 5—7.

Contentment, resignation, and trust in God, are eminent Christian graces. "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have, for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," Heb. xiii. 5. "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you," 1 Pet. v. 7. "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us," Heb. xii. 1. "Be patient in tribulation," Rom. xii. 12. "Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him," Heb. xii. 5. "Not my will but thine be done," Luke xxii. 42. "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" John xvii. 11. "Fear not them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do," Luke xii. 4. "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," Luke xii. 32.

Holiness is represented as indispensable in the Christian character. "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it," Luke xi. 28. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you," John xv. 14. "Be ye holy, for I am holy," 1 Pet. i.

16. "Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14. "May the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Thess. v. 23.—"Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure," 1 John iii. 3. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; and they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts, Gal. v. 22—24." "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity," 2 Pet. i. 5. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things," Phil. iv. 8.

The Christian is taught to set his affections on nobler objects than those of this transitory state. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust corrupt, and thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal," Matt. vi. 19. "Set your affections on the things above, and not on things on the earth," Col. iii. 2. "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour," Phil. iii. 20. "Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come," Heb. xiii. 14.

Benevolence and love are graces, on which the great Author of the Gospel has laid the utmost stress; and

these graces are not, like the benevolence of philosophy, to be exhausted in canting whinings about intense sympathy, and fine expressions about great liberality, but are to be displayed by the mortification of selfish principles, and by active exertions to promote the welfare of others. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," Matt. xxii. 39. "This is my commandment that ye love one another, as I have loved you," John xv. 12. "By love serve one another," Gal. v. 13. "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us," Eph. iv. 32. v. 1. "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren," 1 John iii. 16. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar," 1 John iv. 20. "All things, whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," Matt. vii. 12. "Give to him that asketh thee; and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away," Matt. v. 42. "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's welfare," 1 Cor. x. 24. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ," Gal. vi. 2. "Rejoice with them that rejoice; and weep with them that weep," Rom. xii. 15. "To do good and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased," Heb. xiii. 16. "Pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world," Jam. i. 27. "Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" 1 John iii. 17. "It is more blessed to give than to receive," Acts xx. 35. "He which soweth

sparingly shall reap also sparingly ; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully," 2 Cor. ix. 6.

Mercy, meekness, the love of peace and forgiveness are all strongly inculcated in the Christian system. "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy," Matt. v. 7. "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God," Matt. v. 9. "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men," Rom. xii. 18. "Be ye all of one mind," 1 Pet. iii. 8. "When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any," Mark xi. 25. "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you ; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses," Matt. vi. 14, 15. "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you ; do good to them that hate you ; and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you : that ye may be the children of your Father, which is in heaven ; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust also," Matt. v. 44, 45. "Recompense to no man evil for evil. If thy enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him drink," Rom. xii. 17, 20.

Religion inculcates diligence in the pursuit of piety ; and in attention to the necessary duties of this mortal state. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly with all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him," Col. iii. 15, 16. "Be not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Provide things honest in the sight of all men," Rom. xii. 11, 17. "If any will not work, neither should he eat," 2 Thess. iii. 10. "If

any provide not for his own, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel," 1 Tim. v. 8.

Christianity teaches its disciples so to act in the various relations of domestic and social life, that the peace and happiness of families, or nations, must be the inevitable result. "Teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands. The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness; not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things," Tit. ii. 4, 5. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies," Eph. v. 25. "Speak thou, that the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. Young men, exhort to be sober-minded," Tit. ii. 2, 6. "Ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder," 1 Pet. v. 5. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour thy father and thy mother that it may be well with thee," Eph. vi. 1, 3. "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged," Col. iii. 21. "But bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," Eph. vi. 4. "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters: not with eye-service, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart," Eph. vi. 5, 6. "Be subject not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward," 1 Pet. ii. 18. "And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit," 1 Tim. vi. 2. "And ye, masters, do the same things unto them; forbearing threatening, knowing that your Master also is in heaven, neither is

there respect of persons with him," Eph. vi. 9. "Give unto your servants that which is just and equal," Col. iv. 1. "Honour all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honour the king," 1 Pet. ii. 17. "Render to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another," Rom. xiii. 7, 8.

In such a course of piety and holiness, the disciples of the Lord Jesus are directed to persevere till death. "Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord," 1 Cor. xv. 58. "Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not," Gal. vi. 9. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life," Rev. ii. 10.

5. The motives by which Christianity enforces obedience to its pure and holy precepts, are many of them peculiarly its own, and all of them of the most elevating or weighty kind. Its principal motives are gratitude and love, for the enjoyment of blessings of incalculable worth, and hopes bright with immortal glory. That man is a fallen, guilty, and depraved creature is so visible, that even heathens and deists have acknowledged the fact. That which is visible on this subject even to heathens Christianity more clearly reveals; it discovers to man his real condition; represents him as the transgressor of a divine law, which is holy, just, and good; as having rebelled against God to an awful degree, Luke xv. Matt. xviii., as having deserved the wages of sin, which is death, Rom. vi. 23., and as standing guilty, condemned, and helpless before his God, Rom. iii. 9—19. Christianity points to the source of this guilt, the depravity of a fallen nature,

which is so sinful, that mere human power cannot change it. To qualify any one for celestial happiness, he must be renewed in the spirit of his mind; be "born again," be "born of God," John iii. 5, i. 12, 13. To man, thus fallen and guilty, Christianity proclaims that wonder of wonders, the incarnation of the Son of God. It declares, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world," 1 John iv. 10. 14. The Lord Jesus having thus appeared as "God manifest in the flesh," is declared by his sufferings and death to have atoned for the sins of men. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed," Isa. liii. 5. "He hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many," Heb. ix. 26. 28. The Lord Jesus is further represented as having ascended to heaven, and as there interceding for all that come to him: "Seeing then that we have a great High-priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession," Heb. iv. 14. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them," Heb. vii. 25.

The Christian is represented as under the greatest obligations to this adorable Saviour, and as sensible of those obligations.

"When we were yet without strength,—while we

were yet sinners, Christ died for us," Rom. v. 5. 7. "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son. Much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life," Rom. v. 10. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," Gal. iii. 13. "Jesus delivered us from the wrath to come," 1 Thess. i. 10. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; he hath made us accepted in the beloved. We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace," Eph. i. 3. 6, 7. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich," 2 Cor. viii. 9. "The great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Tit. ii. 13, 14. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him," Rom. v. 1, 2. 9. "Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers: but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. ii. 24, 25.

“Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation,” Rev. i. 5, 6. v. 9. “To all who become partakers of the blessings of redeeming love, eternal good is promised: “Where I am there shall also my servant be,” John xii. “The King shall say to them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” The righteous shall go away “into life eternal,” Matt. xxv. 34. 46. “So shall we ever be with the Lord,” 1 Thess. iv. 17.

True Christians are thus described, not as merely anticipating, but as actually possessing blessings of inestimable value. They are reconciled to God, are redeemed from the curse, are delivered from the wrath to come; have redemption and the forgiveness of sins; are blessed with all spiritual blessings, are brought nigh to God, have access to him, and belong to his household; are delivered from the power of darkness, and are translated into the kingdom of Jesus. And all this multitude of blessings flows from no superiority or virtue of theirs, nor from the mere mercy of their God, but all is enjoyed through the blessed Jesus. Are they reconciled to God? it is through his death. Have they peace with God? He made it through the blood of his cross. Have they redemption? it is through his blood. Are they delivered from this present evil world? He gave himself for their deliverance. Have they received the atonement? it is through the Lord Jesus. Are their sins forgiven?

He is their propitiation. Are they delivered from the curse of the law? He was made a curse for them. Are they saved from the wrath to come? He died and delivered them. Are they rich? it is through his poverty. Are they made divinely righteous? He was made a sin-offering to render them so. Are they made nigh to God? it is by the blood of Christ. Have they all spiritual blessings? they have them in him. His atoning blood is the foundation of their hopes: in short, the Lord Jesus Christ is their "all in all."

All the blessings which the Christian is thus declared to possess are represented as originating in the Father's love, though flowing to the soul through the sufferings and mediation of the Son. The Christian is also described as unspeakably indebted to the Holy Spirit, for blessings of the greatest value. The followers of Christ are represented as "born of the Spirit," John iii. 5, &c., as "abounding in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost," Rom. xv. 13. as having "the love of God shed abroad in" their "hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto them," Rom. v. 5. "The Spirit witnesses with their spirit that they are the children of God," Rom. viii. 15. Through the Spirit they "mortify the deeds of the body," Rom. viii. 13. The Spirit helps their infirmities, Rom. viii. 26, and under his influence every heavenly grace is produced; "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts," Gal. v. 22—24.

The practical effect of these truths upon those that really enter into them is very great. What should be the feelings, what the language of the Christian who views himself and his condition rightly? "Father,"

he can exclaim, "nothing that I have is mine; for I forfeited all, and lost myself. Sin undid me, guilt lay heavily on my soul. Behind me were years of sin, before me endless ruin and the gloom of eternal night. I lay a helpless, ruined wretch, justly condemned to death and hell, and as able to pluck the sun from the firmament as to blot out my crimes, or to set aside the sentence of deserved condemnation. I had lost thy favour. I had lost the love of all the inhabitants of Heaven. I had no claim upon its smallest blessing; nothing was mine, but guilt and condemnation; nothing awaited me but death and damnation. Without one gleam of hope, one possibility of escape, my all forfeited, my all lost, I was hastening to eternal night. Then didst thou interpose. Then did thy Son bleed and atone for me, and now I live. No sentence of death hangs over me; thou hast given me more than a reprieve, a gracious pardon. No condemning law now demands the punishment of my soul, and dooms that soul to death and hell; thou hast turned its threatening curse aside. Not only hast thou given me a pardon, but given thy Spirit to renew my nature; to form in me a holy disposition, and to train me for the holiness and happiness of Heaven. I live, pardoned and saved, a brand snatched from the burning; but whose am I? not my own. The blood which ransomed me when I had lost my all, bought all I now possess, and all I am. My claim to every good was quite extinguished; but thou, who hast ransomed me from death, hast a just claim on all I am and all I have. Thou art my Redeemer, and thou hast a right to me; thou hast had compassion on my body and my soul; I am thy property, and while I live would live to thee. O let me live the life which such obligations demand! Live

as not my own but thine! live as having nothing but what is thine!"

6. Were the principles inculcated, and the precepts given by Christianity, brought into universal action, how vast, how glorious a change would the world exhibit! the earth would become a paradise, in which man would walk with God. The inhabitants of Heaven might almost mingle with the family of man; or, if they did not visit this world, would still behold on the earth, an immense multitude ripening to be their companions in the regions of eternal day. In all the millions of mankind not one child of perdition would be found. Man, no longer alienated from God, would cease to adore the beasts of the field, the reptiles of the dust, the birds of the air, the fishes of the sea, rivers, plants, dead profligates, and demons. The Eternal would no longer be robbed of his honour; and see that worship which belongs only to himself, paid to blocks of stone, and logs of wood, and disgusting images of clay. Nor any longer would there be cause for that severe, but just sarcasm,

"Be heaven and earth amaz'd! 't is hard to say,
Which are more stupid—or their gods or they!"

No longer would man rival fallen angels in wickedness, by rejecting the God of Heaven and earth, and choosing in his place a log of wood, or a stone, or a beast, or a demon.

The deserted heathen temples would moulder into ruins; and not one worshipper be left to the idols, which infatuated millions now adore; no human victim would die upon the altars of heathenism; no pagan priests, deceiving and deceived, act as prime ministers of Satan; no parents would offer their infants in sacrifice to the Molochs of modern times. The tiger would lose his worshippers in Dahomy; and the snake and the alli-

gator and the hyena theirs, and the serpent his in India, and devils theirs in Ceylon. The system of Buddhu would no longer make the millions of Burma and China not merely idolaters but atheists. On the wide earth not an atheist would be found. Not an idol would be known, unless preserved as a memorial of the sin and folly of departed ages.

Then, too, the moral evils that ravage this world would cease to exert their baneful power; and with them many natural evils also would depart. Those precepts of Christianity, which have been adduced in this chapter if universally obeyed, would drive them from the dwellings of man. The plagues of lust and cruelty, of avarice and selfishness, of falsehood and injustice, would vanish, like the gloom of night, before the radiance of the dawning sun. Repentance would fill every heart with abhorrence of iniquity in all its forms. No longer would lewdness, like a malignant pest, spread around desolation, and misery, and woe. No seducer would exist. No young female would mourn her peace and honour lost; no abandoned woman would be found in all the world. The numerous crimes which impurity commits would no longer pollute the earth, and make it "sicken and groan beneath the load of human guilt." Let Christian instruction be universally obeyed, and drunkenness and intemperance would that moment vanish; the drunkard's song would be unheard, and a midnight revel unknown. No longer would graves be filled with the victims of gluttony and drunkenness, nor families be clothed in rags, and pining in hunger, for want of what a savage parent spends on intoxication. Violence would no more be witnessed upon earth. No heart would burn with anger or revenge; no breast rankle with envy or malice; no eye flame with rage; no countenance be distorted with fury; but meekness and

gentleness universally prevail. Man would have no enemy to injury him, no injuries to revenge ; or if un-awares an injury were committed, the only return would be good for evil. The traveller might wander from Britain to Japan, and neither find nor fear an enemy ; and at midnight might travel alone as securely and fearlessly through dreary solitudes as he would do in the midst of companions in the blaze of day. Oppression would no longer exist ; the poor man in his cottage would be as free from its assaults, as the king upon his throne. The sun in its journey round the earth would not behold one murderer there. War, that system of legalized murder, would be for ever banished from this world, which it has drenched with blood ; no widows would mourn their husbands murdered in war ; no orphans lament the death of parents, snatched away by the cruel sword ; nor aged parents go sorrowing to the grave for children thus destroyed. Did Christianity universally prevail, another life would never be forfeited ; the blood of another victim would never be shed ; another murder would never be committed ; another sword would never be drawn. With war would vanish the evils in its train ; the famines it occasions, the pestilences it generates, the oppressive weight of taxes that grinds nations to the dust. Christianity, universally embraced, would turn swords into plough-shares, and spears into pruning-hooks ; would disband hostile armies, annihilate ships of war and instruments of destruction ; would leave towers and fortifications to crumble into ruins, unheeded and unvalued ; and make the nations of the earth as safe without one spear, or shield, or sword, as are the inhabitants of heaven itself.

Dishonesty, and all the evils it occasions, would take their everlasting flight ; no light weights or short

measures would deceive and rob the unsuspecting; no more would there be lawful debts unpaid, no borrowing without repaying; no hard bargains, no exaction; no fraudulent debtor would cheat his creditor; no griping miser hoard up his useless store. No dishonest servant would pilfer his employer's property, or receive wages which, through idleness and inattention, he had not earned. No unkind master would oppress his dependents; the rich would not withhold any part of the remuneration which the poor man's labours deserve. An extortioner in any of these, or in the thousand ways in which men become extortioners, would be unknown; nor would one thief exist in all the nations of the earth. No robber would ever molest the traveller, no plunderer disturb the sleeping flock; the fruits of the orchard or the field would be untouched by a dishonest hand. Houses would need no locks, no bolts, no bars; the most lonely dwelling would be perfectly secure, and its inhabitants rest as safely and sweetly beneath the shades of night as a babe upon its mother's breast. No poor negro stolen from his country would lament friends and liberty for ever lost; a slave would not exist, nor a slave-dealer or slave-owner be found upon earth.

Were attention to the precepts of Christianity universal and perfect, a host of other evils that now haunt the dwellings of man would be no more. Selfishness leads legions of evils in its train, but this would die; and with it the contentions, the ambition, the pride, the cruelty which it produces. The haughty look, the sneer, the contempt of pride would be unknown. The great would be respected, not for worthless show, but for real greatness, eminence in piety and benevolence. The eye of scorn would no longer turn contemptuously on the poor. No false philosopher

would seek applause by cobweb systems, spun out to deceive and undo the fools that admire them ; no young men would be self-conceited ; the blooming damsel, no longer proud of fading charms, would become more lovely, while prizing charms which cannot fade. The poor would not survey their superiors with discontent, nor envy those whom Providence had placed in higher stations than their own. Scandal would no more blacken the reputation of the innocent ; no tale bearer, with a tongue set on fire of hell, would spread discord and strife through a circle, that else might dwell in peace. Lying, the source of innumerable evils, would cease. Neither in public nor private life can a course of sin subsist without deceit ; the seducer prevails by lying ; by this the debtor cheats his creditor. By lying, nations mislead and ruin each other ; by lying, impostors deceive the charitable ; and by fictitious tales of woe obtain that aid, which, but for this deceit, would be employed in relieving real misery. But, were the precepts of the Gospel universally obeyed, not a lie would be uttered, nor a liar found in all the habitations of men. Perjury would then vanish ; oaths would not be needed, for every lip would be the lip of truth. No profaneness, no cursing, no foolish talking, no corrupt communication would wound the ear, or pain or pollute the heart.

The evils that occasion the bitterest sorrows of domestic life would all cease ; brothers and sisters would dwell together, strangers to contention and strife. No disobedient son, no undutiful daughter, no unkind husband, no jarring wife, would be seen in all the world.

In such a state of things there would be no oppressive rulers, no unfaithful subjects. Judges might cease to take their circuits, and to occupy the hall of justice ; there would be no criminals to try. The gibbet would

be no longer needed, and prisons would continue without one inhabitant till the hand of time levelled them in the dust, and left not one stone upon another. Laws would still continue in force, but they would scarcely be needed, for each would be a law unto himself.

Could a system that aims at producing such effects come from any source but God? But as yet, we have contemplated only a part of its design. This divine religion aims at the introduction of much positive good. It would restore to God the place he ought to hold in the affections of his creatures, and man to the favour and image of his Maker. If all were brought fully under its influence, every heart would love God with supreme affection. Every tongue would praise him. The black man and the white, the inhabitants of China and of Britain, of Greenland and of Chili, would unite in the same offering, and exult in the same Father. The rising sun would call every human being to communion with his God; and through the silence of evening, the countless aspirations of these countless worshippers would ascend to heaven. The sabbath would be a day of universal rest, and universally improved would cheer, and bless, and sanctify a whole world travelling together to a sabbath in the skies. The whole human race would commence in time those praises which would be carried on and perfected through the extent of eternity. Every one would be a child of God, a member of his family, a temple of his Spirit. Man, no longer indulging a will of his own, would make his heavenly Father's pleasure his. "Thy will be done," would be a universal prayer; and not the formal prayer of hypocritical lips, but of submissive and devoted hearts: and what would be that world in which the will of God was done by all, and done in all, and done as it is done in heaven! Submission would lighten pain and affliction of half their weight. Instead

of repining, the sufferer would feel a divine calm within while resigning his all to the will of his God. Stayed on Him, every soul would be kept in perfect peace. No distrust, no anxiety, would harass the happy inhabitants of the world; but each would confide in the care of an almighty Friend; and in the darkest hours each would rejoice that,

“ Behind a frowning Providence,
He hides a smiling face.”

All would act as in his sight, and endure as seeing Him, who, though invisible, is the Searcher of hearts. Every mercy would be received as a gift of his bounty; and enjoyed not for its value only, but as a token of a Father's love. Every affliction would be considered as a chastisement inflicted by his hand. Man's chief concern would be his Maker's glory; and his only ambition to receive, in the day of eternal judgment, the approbation of his God. The daily mercies of Providence would call forth unfeigned gratitude, and the wonders of redeeming love would universally excite admiration, thankfulness, and praise. That glorious person whose life redeemed a world, would be trusted by all and loved by all. In Him all would glory, and he would be imitated by all. Even deists have extolled the character of Christ. Chubb says,

“In Christ we have an example of a quiet and peaceable spirit; of a becoming modesty and sobriety; just and honest, upright and sincere; and, above all, of a most gracious and benevolent temper. His life was a beautiful picture of human nature, when in its native purity and simplicity; and showed at once what excellent creatures men would be when under the influence and power of that Gospel he preached unto them.”

Rousseau exclaims, “What sweetness, what purity in his manners! what affecting grace in his instructions!

what elevation in his maxims ! what profound wisdom in his discourses ! what empire over his passions ! Yes, if the life and death of Socrates are those of a philosopher, the life and death of Jesus Christ are those of a God !”

Were Christianity universal in its influence, this holy life, this spotless example, this life not of a philosopher, but of a God, is that which all would strive to copy ; and each would become a humble representation of what Jesus was. All that is pure, all that is lovely, all that is courteous, would be sought by all. Like him, all would consider themselves as strangers and pilgrims upon earth, and would live and act as travellers to Heaven. The affections of none would grovel in the dust. The things unseen would warm the hearts, and engage the desires, and animate the zeal of all. Meekness and gentleness would diffuse a universal charm, and dwell in every house. Rude unkindness and rugged tempers, sullenness and obstinacy would be driven from the abodes of men. Humility would lower each in his own esteem, and exalt him in the esteem of all besides. Contentment would reconcile every man to his lot. No one would view another as his rival ; but ambition and dissatisfaction would flee away. Justice would govern all the dealings of men. Temperance would possess a universal reign. The comforts and blessings of time would be employed for the Giver’s glory. Raiment would no longer be prostituted as fuel to pride. Men would use the world without abusing it : would weep as though they wept not ; and rejoice as though they rejoiced not ; and buy as though they possessed not. In such a renewed state no one would live to himself, but each would seek the benefit of all. The happiness of all would be the concern of each, and the happiness of each the

concern of all. The comfortless would be cheered, the hungry fed, the naked clothed, the sick visited. The mourner would every where find a comforter, the widow a friend, the orphan a father. Love would lead the poor to rejoice in the prosperity of the rich, and the rich to minister so cheerfully and abundantly to the comfort of the poor, that poverty itself would wear a smile. *To give would universally be esteemed more blessed than to receive. Men would become as anxious to give as they now are to gain, and then would part with wealth more cheerfully than they receive it now. In every land the traveller would find himself in the midst of friends. Love would diffuse a holy calm through every breast, would render every house the abode of tranquillity, make every family happy in each other, and the world itself but one family; over villages, towns, and nations, it would spread a serenity as sweet as the unruffled calm of a still sabbath-evening on a summer's day. Rivers, mountains, and seas would divide mankind into distinct communities, but not divide those bands of love that would knit them all into one. Every husband and wife now truly one, would cheer, and help, and bless each other with mutual and unmingled kindness. Every parent would train his children up for heaven, and every child love, honour, obey, and requite his parents. Every son would make a glad father, and every daughter a happy mother. Servants would regard their employers' interests as their own; and masters in every way promote their servants' welfare. Rulers, as shepherds and fathers, with parental care would labour for the interests of the happy nations. Subjects would universally be faithful and loving. The ministers of religion would be in reality what they are in name; all taught of God, and all with pious care, would lead their

flocks forward to the fold in heaven. A time-serving, time-wasting preacher, would not exist among the myriads employed as ministers of the sanctuary; nor an unkind, discordant flock, nor a lukewarm Christian, nor a bigot, nor a hypocrite. Christians would form in reality but one church, as the world one family. All the followers of Jesus would be of one heart, and one soul, and all the world would be his followers. He that had five talents would improve them all, and he that had two, and he that had one; and all would provoke each other to love and holiness. To the aged, the hoary head would be universally as a crown of glory. Ripened in piety, they would stand as pillars in the temple of God below, prepared to become pillars in his temple above. The young would all display the charms of early piety. They would attract the love of earth and heaven; and render religion as lovely in youth as it is venerable in age. And in the graces and duties of religion all would abound, and all would persevere, till called from this world to a mansion in the skies. Thus earth and *heaven* would contain but one family, and God the Father of the whole. The prospect of eternal life would gladden every heart, and diffuse through the whole race of man a general joy. What a world! How changed from what it is! The greater part of the evils under which man groans and mourns, would be banished with his vices! Yet not all, this is not his rest, for sin has polluted the earth. Sickness and death would still remain. Yet sickness universally would be lightened of its heaviest load. No sick bed would be without comfort and a comforter. The consolations of the Gospel which all had loved, would cheer the dying hours of all. Death would no longer be the king of terrors, but would universally wear a smile, and beside the grave of every

human being might that sublime anthem be sung, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ?"

These are the effects which Christianity, universally received and obeyed, would produce. Is it a cunningly-devised fable? What human being could have devised it? Suppose it quite banished from the world, and all remembrance of it forgotten, who could devise such another?

7. Christianity is either from Heaven or it is the invention of the worst and most wicked of men; there is no medium. This proposition admits abundant proof; if Christianity is what it professes to be, it is from Heaven: a system of truth and love, of which God himself is the author; but if it be not this, it is the most complete system of imposture that ever was palmed upon the world. The *most complete*, for other false religions have had so much in them quite unworthy of God, as to prove their human origin; but this is not the case with the Christian system. The wisest, and holiest, and best of mankind have always viewed it as divine. If Christianity is not from God, it is not merely a complete imposture, but the invention of the worst and most wicked of men. Its authors professed that it was from God, professed to work miracles in its support, and lived and died maintaining that it was a revelation from Heaven; and in attestation of this, most of them laid down their own lives. But if it were not from God, this was all base forgery and impious falsehood. They lived liars, and died liars; and died martyrs to a lie, and thus in fact became self-murderers. But their guilt in this case did not stop here.—They saw multitudes embracing the Gospel, and for it suffering persecution and death; yet instead of now

coming forward, and telling them not to suffer for a fable, they encourage them to bear all extremities, and death itself rather than renounce their faith. On the supposition that they knew Christianity to be from Heaven, this conduct was kind and consistent, for they knew that an abundant recompense awaited these sufferers; but if the apostles knew that it was a forgery, (and if it were, they must have known it,) what guilt or cruelty ever equalled that of encouraging multitudes to lay down even life itself for such a forgery? of spreading through the world a system of imposture that would occasion the ruin and death of multitudes, break up the earthly prosperity of many families, and bring children and parents to an untimely grave? If Christianity be not from Heaven, a man who dies ignominiously for committing a single murder, would be innocent, compared with Paul and the other apostles who encouraged thousands to lay down their lives for what themselves knew to be a mere human imposture? It would be absurdity itself to consider the apostles as good, but deceived men. They could not be deceived. This admits of irresistible proof; and consequently they were either the best and most favoured of men, or the worst and most impious. The religion they taught either came from Heaven, and they were Heaven's messengers to man, or it was the production of the most unfeeling hearts, of the most hardened liars, that ever trod the surface of the earth. Which were they? Let the system answer. It has been shown that were Christianity received by all, and fully obeyed by all, there would not be idolator, nor an idol, nor an adulterer, nor a debauchee, nor a prostitute, nor a thief, nor a miser, nor an extortioner, nor a drunkard, nor a glutton, nor a murderer, nor war, nor revenge, nor malice, nor strife, nor hatred, nor a lie, nor scandal, nor

an oppressor, nor a slave, nor an unfaithful servant, nor a hard master, nor an unkind parent, nor an undutiful child, nor pride, nor profaneness, nor a criminal, nor a prisoner, "beneath the circuit of the sun."

But instead of these things, all would love God, all would trust him, all would obey him. The world would be his temple, and all nations his family. All would copy the holy example of the holy Jesus; all would confide in him, all would love him; and loving, imitate him; all would be contented, holy, humble, meek, peaceful, gentle, good, patient, honest, just, united, compassionate, anxious for the welfare of others, more willing to give than to receive; tender-hearted, temperate, courteous; friends to the friendless; fathers to the fatherless; bent on heaven, and improving, for the honour of God and the good of man, their time on earth. Every husband and every wife would be happy in each other. Every child dutiful, and every parent affectionate; every servant faithful, and every master just and kind. The whole world as with but one heart, one soul, one object, one peaceful way, and one happy end; and all leading such a life as angels would lead, if angels dwelt below.

You have seen that if the apostles were not the messengers of Heaven, they were the worst, the most wicked, the most false, the most impious of men. Could such men invent such a system? Could all that is benevolent come from an unfeeling heart? All that is lovely and true, and that would change this melancholy world into a paradise, proceed from the most abandoned and impious impostors? Would it not be more reasonable to expect grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? Would it not be more possible for fire to freeze? and ice to burn? for earthquakes to build? for volcanoes to spread plenty? for poison to nourish?

and famine to feed starving millions, than for bad men to invent such a system ?

Whence then did Christianity spring? Not from bad men ; it could not come from them. It must then have come from God ; and it is worthy of him. It bears its Father's lovely image ; and in its likeness to his excellences, shows its Author.

8. Perhaps an objection already glanced at, may be started to the preceding argument, respecting the effects and tendency of Christianity ; it may be said, that it does not produce in its professors such effects as those which have been described. To this it is sufficient to reply, that the question is not what professed Christians are, but what common sense must judge to be the tendency of Christianity, by examining its nature as displayed in the New-Testament. Were there not a Christian on earth, this would remain what it is. But it may be added, that with the generality of those who are called Christians, Christianity has no concern. They are heathens in heart, and in life, though Christians in name. Of those who make a more express profession of Christianity, some are hypocrites. It is not responsible for their vices. Many that are sincere, are daily mourning their own defects, and lamenting that they fall so far short of what their holy religion requires. Surely Christianity is not censurable for what its imperfect professors declare it condemns. But, after all the deductions that may thus be made, the tendency of Christianity is unaltered. The holy lives of many eminent Christians have displayed its power ; and in numberless instances unknown and unnoticed by the world, it has raised to holiness, happiness, and heaven, the sons and daughters of vice and perdition. It has been said,

“Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.”

Thus Christian piety often blooms in scenes unnoticed by the busy world; yet though it blooms unseen by the gay multitude, it *wastes* no sweetness. Its charms are perceived, its influence is felt, while its obscure and perhaps poor possessors are maturing upon earth for a dwelling in the heavens.

It is proper further to observe, upon the argument maintained in this chapter, that there is nothing in Christianity to counteract its divine and holy tendency. In the system of Mahomet, and those of some heathen philosophers, some good appears, but so much evil is mixed with it, as more than counterbalances the good, and more than counteracts all the effects such good principles might produce. Compare their systems to a machine, and it may be said that one part of the machine obstructs the motions of the other. Instead of moving in harmony, one wheel counterworks another wheel, and the whole machine is disordered, and no valuable end accomplished. But it is not thus with Christianity; every wheel acts in its place, every movement plays in harmony. No one precept opposes another precept; no doctrine counteracts another doctrine; there is nothing in Christianity itself to weaken the influence of any of its principles or precepts. All act together, and the designed result is the greatest glory to God, and the greatest good to man. It is true, human corruption opposes a powerful obstacle to the tendency of Christianity; but this is no defect in the system itself: this is an external, not an internal obstacle to its benevolent design.

9. There is another kind of internal evidence for the

divinity of the scriptures, which deserves attention, yet I shall not enlarge upon it: and though it is very powerful, unless you are a partaker of the grace of God, you will not correctly discern it. It may be safely and confidently asserted, that unconverted men did not write the Scriptures, for they could not write them. The views given in the Scriptures of human nature, of the deceitfulness and depravity of the heart, of the spiritual conflicts of a penitent sinner, or the varying experience of a child of God, are such as no unconverted man could describe, for he never had them. The world ridicules them; the wise and the learned treat them as enthusiasm and fanaticism. But does any man come to know himself, he then begins to discern that no mirror more truly reflects the likeness of a face, than the Scriptures do the image of his heart. He sees now that this book describes to him what he is; and the more he grows in self-acquaintance, the more exact the picture seems. He can say of the Scriptures, "Come, see a book which tells me all that ever I was, and shows me all I am. Is not this from Heaven?" No man, unless taught of God, ever could thus describe the human heart, and no man, unless taught of God, ever will see that the description is truth itself. Suppose a book were written, delineating, in a glowing manner, the beauties of the creation as they appear to the eye. Let this book be read to a man born blind, what ideas would he gain upon the subject? it would be unintelligible to him. Let this man have sight given him, then let him survey the creation, and afterwards read this book, it would be a new book to him; he would understand it now. He might now say, He who wrote this book was not blind; a blind man could not possibly have written it. He describes things just as I see them. What was

needful to write this book?—Sight. What was needful to understand it?—Sight. The blind could not write the book, nor the blind understand it. Apply this to the present subject: a man blind to the things of God, could not have written those descriptions of the human heart and religious experience, which the Scriptures contain; nor can a man who is blind to the things of God, gain any clear knowledge on these subjects, though he may admit them in speculation; but, if taught of God, if his blindness be removed, all becomes clear: he sees his heart described in the Bible with infallible correctness; and thence may draw the satisfactory and important conclusion; Bad men **COULD** not write this book; those who wrote it must be what they professed themselves, the messengers of Heaven, and the religion they have taught must be divine.

CHAPTER V.

THE NECESSITY OF REVELATION.

1. **THE** argument insisted on in the preceding chapter, is in itself sufficiently strong; for whence, except from Heaven, could come a system that would make this distressed and wicked world a paradise? But this argument receives additional force, if we contrast Christianity with the other prevalent religions of ancient or modern times; and with the avowed opinions of professed philosophers, either ancient or modern. What unassisted reason would do to promote the religious welfare of man, is best seen in what it has done. It may be useful to take a brief survey of some of the more prominent parts of the ancient heathen systems! and of the conduct and principles of their supporters. The apostle Paul, in the first chapter of the Romans,

has described them in a correct but most dreadful manner. Is his dreadful description overstrained? Is his dark picture too darkly coloured? Let a brief statement of facts reply.* Excepting the Jewish nation, men appear universally to have renounced the God of Heaven. The Egyptians supposed the sun and moon to be the "eternal gods" that govern the whole world. The Phœnicians accounted the sun "the only Lord of heaven." Plato says, that the ancient Greeks appear to have esteemed the sun, moon, earth, stars, and heaven, to be the only gods. When the Greeks grew polite and learned, they still worshipped the heavenly bodies. Anaxagoras was accused at Athens of impiety for affirming the stars to be inanimate, and the sun a body of fire, as he thus denied their divinity. Even the much-extolled Socrates censured him for presumption and arrogance. Plato frequently prescribes the worship of the stars, which seem the principal divinities he recommends to the people. Plutarch speaks of the sun and moon as animate, "whom all men worship, and to whom they offer up sacrifices and prayers." Pliny says, "It is reasonable to believe that this world, and heaven which encompasseth and governeth all things, is God eternal, immense, and which was never made, and shall never be destroyed." The apostate emperor Julian speaks of the sun as the parent of mankind, and the giver of all good. Macrobius, another pagan writer who flourished under the emperor Theodosius, says, that the priests used this prayer, "O al-

* The statements contained in this chapter are chiefly collected from Leland's invaluable work on the Necessity of Revelation. Readers who wish for the authorities on which these statements are made, are referred to that work where they will find an immense body of evidence proving their truth: and many statements respecting the horrid vices of ancient heathens which were too impure and appalling to be even mentioned here.

mighty sun, the spirit of the world, the power of the world, the light of the world." The same writer states, that the Assyrians worshipped the sun as the most high God. The sun was the chief god of the inhabitants of Mexico and Peru; and was adored, under the name of Bel, by the ancient inhabitants of Britain. This idolatry, which the scriptures call the worship of the host of heaven, appears to have overspread the world.* Another species of idolatry, which perhaps in a greater degree than the last, deluged the world with abominations and iniquity, was the worship of dead, and often of profligate, men.

The ancient Phœnicians and Egyptians reckoned those among the greatest gods who had been the inventors of useful things. The greatest gods of the Romans, were Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Neptune, Vulcan, and Apollo; and the goddesses Juno, Vesta, Minerva, Ceres, Diana, Venus. Cicero expressly says, that the chief gods of the nations were taken from among men; and that their sepulchres were shown in Greece. The conduct of many of these gods is represented by their votaries as profligate in the extreme. A man who should act as these gods are represented to have done, would now be abhorred or even hung for his crimes. Besides vices not proper to be mentioned, Mercury is represented as a thief. Saturn is said to have devoured his own children. Vulcan to have been lamed by being tossed out of heaven by Jupiter, for taking part with Juno, when she and he were quarrelling. The rest of the rabble of their gods were no better. In short, "the system of the poetical theology was full of the genealogies, the vices, the adulteries, the contentions of their gods. These things were acted on the theatres,

* Leland's Advantage and Necessity of the Christian Revelation, p. i. c. 3.

with the applause and approbation of the people. These were the deities to whom temples and altars were erected, and sacrifices offered; to whose statues they paid divine honours; and whom the poets sung in all the charms of flowing numbers.”* To this it may be added, that Augustine observes that those fables, which ascribe to the gods, actions that none but the vilest men could commit, “were not only permitted to be acted on the public theatres, and heard with pleasure there, but that they were regarded as things pleasing to the gods themselves, by which they were propitiated and rendered favourable.” Among the ancient, as well as among modern heathens, the worship of evil spirits also prevailed. The Egyptians worshipped Tryphon, whom they esteemed an evil power, at some solemnities, and cursed him at others. The Persians adored Arimanus, believed to be the evil principle. Porphyry represents evil demons as the authors of all human calamities, as seducers and liars, and plainly intimates that men generally rendered them religious worship.

The brute and vegetable creation also became objects of divine worship. The Egyptians paid divine honours to the ibis and ichneumon; to wolves, lions, crocodiles, dogs, cats, the cow, the bull, the goat, the sheep, the hawk, and many other animals both terrestrial and aquatic. They are also charged with worshipping onions, garlic, &c.; and Juvenal derides them with having their gods growing in their gardens. The Chaldeans adored fire. The Athenians and others, images. Stilpo, a philosopher, was banished from Athens, by the tribunal of Areopagus, for saying that a statue of Minerva, which Phidias the sculptor made, was not a god. Divinity was ascribed to whatever

* Leland, p. 166. Ib. p. 176. Ib. pp. 150—153.

was useful in life. Temples were erected to mind, faith, virtue, honour, concord, health, victory, liberty; also to Fever, to Volupia, as the goddess of pleasure, &c. The Romans also built an altar to evil fortune, and deified tempests. The Athenians erected a temple to contumely and impudence. On the whole, there was scarcely anything in nature so vile, or so foolish, as not to be worshipped as a god, by some or other of the heathens.*

2. The religious worship paid these idols was in many cases cruel and bloody, or impure, to a degree which decency forbids expressing. Human sacrifices were generally prevalent. The Syrians, Arabians, Phœnicians, Carthaginians, Gauls, Germans, Britons, Greeks, Romans, and other nations united in these murderous rites. The Carthaginians, on one occasion, offered 200 children belonging to some of the principal families to Moloch, or Saturn.†

Other most cruel rites were practised by different pagans; and by those very nations whom children and youth are absurdly and unchristianly taught to admire. Baal's priests slashed themselves with knives. This too was done in the worship of Isis. At one of the festivals of Bacchus, his priests tore and devoured the raw and reeking entrails of goats. In the processions of Cybele, the previously mangled priests made hideous howlings, and cut themselves till the blood gushed. This worship was part of the public religion of admired Rome. At Sparta boys were frequently whipped to death on the altar of Diana; and Potter says, that Bacchus had an altar in Arcadia, where a great many young damsels were beaten to death with rods. On the impurity of paganism, Leland observes,

* Leland, p. i. c. 5.

† Ib. v. i. p. 187, &c.

“As some of the heathen rites were cruel and inhuman, others were no less remarkable for all manner of licentiousness. Many of their rites were indecent and impure.” To such an extent was this the case, that the most shameless wickedness not merely was practised by the worshippers, but constituted *a part of the worship*. This was the case in various Greek and Roman rites. The Greeks had a goddess of wantonness, and one temple at Corinth, with which were connected a thousand women of abandoned character. In fact, various shocking abominations made a part of the religion of the Gentiles. Some of these were so horribly impure, that it might have been supposed none but demons could invent, and none but persons possessed by demons practise them. Yet they were practised by men, by women, and not merely under the cover of darkness, but in the face of day. But a veil must be thrown over the disgusting subject of pagan impurity. It is too vile to be expressed. In Leland’s work, already referred to, are many particulars brought to view, calculated to shock the feelings of every well-disposed mind, but also calculated to produce a deep impression of the value of the HOLY Gospel. Little do Christians know what they do, who admire the ancient Greeks and Romans. More reasonable were it to admire the great majority of criminals, who die on the gallows for their crimes, than those nations *whose very religion was worse than the crimes for which these criminals suffer*. It may, indeed, be confidently asserted, that the tendency of the most celebrated systems of ancient paganism was the same as is that of modern heathenism. As the latter now is, so the former were adapted to form man to the image of Satan, and to degrade him below the brute. One effect is accomplished by their cruelty, the other by their im-

purity. Whence such systems sprung, no reasonable person need hesitate to determine.

3. When such were the gods, and such the religion of the world, it is easy to conjecture what the people would be. It is true they had some good laws, but these were so intermingled with others of an opposite description, that their manners were dissolute to a degree of which many have little conception. Ancient and modern writers have extolled the laws of Lycurgus. Plutarch says, that he was pronounced rather a god than a man, and speaks of him as a perfect, wise man, who obliged the world with a nation of philosophers. The Spartans sacrificed to him as a god; and Aristotle extolled him, as deserving higher honour than this. Yet this man, whom the most celebrated pagan philosophers extolled, and modern infidels have admired, encouraged thieving. The Spartan boys were trained to steal, and whipped unmercifully if detected, not for thieving, but for their want of skill. By another of his institutions he encouraged the murdering of the Helotes or slaves. He sanctioned the exposure of deformed children.— Every father was obliged by the laws to bring his child to be examined by persons appointed, and if it were deformed, or of a bad constitution, it was cast into a deep cavern. Some of his other institutions were adapted to pollute all the young, and to encourage among the more mature the most shameless vice. The people were consequently impure, proud, and perfidious. Such was this nation of philosophers, and such would nations of philosophers be now.

In other parts of Greece, the custom of exposing children prevailed. Aristotle expressly says, that it should be a law not to bring up any weak or maimed child; and that if the laws of a country forbade this practice, the number of children should be limited by law, and any

above that number be destroyed. The laws of several of the Grecian states encouraged the wickedness with which the heathens are charged in the Epistle to the Romans.

The Romans also used to expose their deformed children, which was practised even in Seneca's time. The ancient Romans appear to have been allowed by Romulus to destroy all their female children, except the eldest. The custom of gladiatorial shows prevailed universally among the Romans. Not merely men, but the women, divested of compassion, took a pleasure in seeing the combatants kill each other. So frequent were these shows, and so great the number killed, that Lipsius says, no war occasioned such slaughter as these sports of pleasure, throughout the several provinces of the vast Roman empire. Like the Greeks, the Romans were so sunk in horrid vices, that the Apostle's assertion applies with all its force to them: "It is a shame even to speak of the things that are done by them in secret."

4. So far were the celebrated philosophers of antiquity from instructing and reforming the darkened nations, that by their speculations they increased the darkness; and by their infamous examples encouraged all manner of vice. Many of them were actually atheists, and denied the existence of any God. Others of them encouraged the idolatrous superstitions that they could not, and did not believe. Varro, after exposing the cruel and impure rites of their deities, adds, "A wise man will observe all these things, not indeed as acceptable to the gods, but as commanded by the laws." This hypocritical system appears to have been prevalent among them. Thus would they honour as gods the images they despised; and join in the rites they pronounced ridiculous or obscene. They them-

selves were in darkness. Aristotle says, "As the eyes of bats are to the brightness of the daylight, so also is the understanding of our souls towards those things which are by nature the most manifest of all." Hence, while some were atheists, others maintained that fire is God;* that this world is an animal endued with intelligence; that it is happy, reasonable, and wise; and that this world is God.† Hence they supposed their souls part of the divine soul, and corporeal things parts of the body of God.

Marcus Antoninus, the persecuter of the Christians, thus adored the world: in one of his prayers he says, "Whatsoever is agreeable to thee, O comely world, is agreeable to me." Plato has several passages containing an express acknowledgment of one supreme God, but he did not think it proper or safe to communicate such things to the people. Instead of proposing God to them as the object of their worship, he recommends them to trust in, depend on, and worship the sun, moon, stars, and the gods established by the laws. Thus when he knew God, he glorified him not as God, but became vain in his imaginations, and his foolish heart was darkened; and he did what in him lay to darken others.‡ Cicero recommended the same kind of worship, and prescribed not only that of the greater of the Roman gods, but also that of Hercules, Romulus, &c., together with that of the household gods; and binds it as a duty upon people in these things to follow the religion of their ancestors. So far was this admired man from indulging concern to know his Maker, that he spoke of the Jewish religion as a barbarous superstition. So-

* Nichols's Conference, v. i. p. 179.

† Leland, p. i. c. 7. Ib. p. i. c. 9. Ib. p. i. c. 13. This was the sentiment of Varro, and appears to have been that of Cicero and the Stoics.

‡ Leland, part i. c. 12. p. 296.

crates sanctioned idolatry ; when about to die, he ordered a cock to be sacrificed to Esculapius. With respect to the immortality of the soul and of a future state for man, they were equally perplexed, and equally ignorant. When Cicero wrote to prove the immortality of the soul, he represents the contrary as a prevalent opinion : and according to him, a strange confusion existed among the philosophers on this subject “Some said, it (the soul) was the heart, others the blood, others the brain, others the breath, others fire, others said it was nothing but an empty name, others that it was harmony, others that it was number.”* Many held it to be not distinct from the body ; and others, who thought it distinct, supposed it extinguished at death or soon after. Seneca, who has some sublime thoughts on the immortality of the soul, elsewhere represents this belief as a kind of pleasing dream. In one of his epistles, he speaks of having been apparently near death, and mentions what then supported him, not a hope full of immortality, but a belief that after death he should be as insensible as before he was born.† Epictetus takes no notice of future rewards and punishments, but says, that at death, men return to the elements of which they were made. The emperor Marcus Antoninus appears to have supposed, that after death, the soul is dissipated and dispersed.‡ These three last philosophers lived after the promulgation of the Gospel, and two of them appeared to have noticed its professors in their writings, but, they were too full of philosophic pride to embrace that humbling system, they lived and died, with all their fancied wisdom, miserable heathens. The Pythagoreans, like the modern Brahmins, main-

* Cic. de Leg. 1. ii. c. 8. Leland, p. i. c. 19. p. 448. Ib. p. iii. c. 3. Ib. v. ii. 317. 4to. edition. † Senecæ Epis. 55. & 102. ed. Commelin.

‡ Leland, p. iii. c. 3. p. 327. 329.

tained that the soul after death passes into other bodies, those of men or beasts ; and their founder, Pythagoras, to confirm this doctrine, uttered the base and scandalous falsehood, that he had undergone several such transmigrations, professing to name the persons whom his soul had animated through a succession of ages. Socrates also, with respect to the bulk of mankind, held the transmigration of souls ; and thought those of bad men entered the bodies of asses, wolves, hawks, kites, &c., and those of good men into animals of a kind and social nature, as bees, ants, &c. ; or else returned to human bodies.* Cicero evidently loved the doctrine of a future state, but, as it is well known, speaks of it with uncertainty and doubt.

The learned Jacob Bryant has collected some important testimonies on the subject of this section. He remarks :

“The uncertainty, under which mankind laboured, is further described by that moral poet Euripides in his *Hippolytus* ; where he speaks of the misery and blindness of people in this world, and their doubts in respect to futurity :

“The life of man is all a scene of care,
Which knows no intermission. When it's past,
Should there be any future bliss, it lies
In cloud, and dreary darkness, unrevealed.
Yet we, too fondly led by what we feel,
Prize the brief sunshine of this fleeting life,
Anxious : because we have neither view, or hope
Of aught hereafter. Thus we darkling rove,
Amus'd with fables and poetic dreams.”

The poet Moschus writes to the same purpose in his epitaph upon Bion :

‘Alas ! the mallow in the garden fair,
And herbs, and flowers, may fade : but they again
Rise up to life, and have their birth renew'd.
But we, the great, the powerful, and wise,
Soon as we sink oblivious, there ensues
A deep, a deadly, ever-during sleep,
From whence we wake no more.”

* Leland, p. iii. c. 4.

“Hence Seneca in the *Troades* makes a person say, ‘There is nothing in death: and death itself is nothing.’ And in Sallust we read to the same purpose the words of Julius Cesar, ‘Death is a dissolution of all mortal evils. Beyond it there is no room for either happiness or care.’”

Catullus writes,

“My Lesbia, let us live, and let us love,
Suns set and rise again, but we when once
Our hasty day concludes, shall sleep through one
Eternal night.”

5. In pursuing the subject it may be observed, that increasing refinement did not promote more purity, nor science diminish vice. Instead of that, as they advanced in civilization, the heathen sunk deeper in religious debasement; and their philosophers were among the most vicious and abandoned. Plutarch states in his life of Numa, that he forbade the Romans to represent God under the form of man or beast; nor was there any graven or painted image admitted among them formerly; and that for 160 years they built temples, but made no image. Juvenal (*Sat. xiii.*) observes, that in ancient times they had not such a crowd of gods as they worshipped afterwards. Thus they appear to have had some juster ideas of God, but, according to the apostle's statement, they changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man; professing themselves wise they became fools, for the more their fancied wisdom increased, the more their foolish gods multiplied. In fact, the philosophers were so far from converting men from idolatry and vice, that they patronized both in their maxims, and by their practice.

Plato, with others, maintains the lawfulness of lying, and advises governors to lie to their subjects and ene-

mies. With him, the Stoics held that a wise man might make use of a lie many ways. This same admired philosopher, who was called the divine Plato, and who, Cicero says, was a kind of god among the philosophers, in a book in which he designed to give a PERFECT model of a well-ordered state, recommends a number of practices too abominable and impure to be mentioned in these pages.* Others represented various vices as not base, and maintained that the opinion that they were so, was "agreed upon for the sake of restraining *fools*." The most wicked practices that can be mentioned they maintained to be reasonable and harmless.†

6. While such were the doctrines of the philosophers, we need not wonder that their practice accorded with their precepts. Plato, Socrates, Xenophon, Solon, Zeno, are all represented as dreadfully impure; and Cicero declares that the philosophers not merely practised, but gloried in their crimes.‡ The vaunted Epictetus extols Diogenes as a model and pattern of virtue, sent by Jupiter to instruct men concerning good and evil, and calls him the divine Diogenes; yet this same divine Diogenes associated with abandoned women, and practised vice too shameful even to mention in these pages. "Diogenes and the Cynics generally taught, that parents may lawfully sacrifice and eat their children; and that there is neither sin nor shame in the grossest and most public acts of lewdness. Both Zeno and Cleanthes taught, that children may as lawfully roast and eat their parents, as any other food."§ The hateful tale might be continued, but it may be better to pause. A number of the men that have been mentioned, are among the most respectable of those,

* Leland, p. ii. c. 12. Ib. p. ii. c. 8. † Ib. p. ii. c. 6. ‡ Ib. p. iii. c. 3.

§ Dwight's first Sermon on Infidel Philosophy.

whose systems modern philosophers prefer to that of Christ and his apostles.

7. The pride of these men was not less shocking than their abominable vices. Epictetus, one of those whom modern infidels admire, says, "As to the body, thou art a small part of the universe; but in respect of the mind or reason, neither worse nor less than the gods. Will you not place your good there where you are equal to the gods?" In opposition to the threatening, "I will fetter thee," he answers, "Fetter me! thou wilt fetter my feet: but Jupiter himself cannot overcome my choice."* Plutarch represents the Stoics as asserting, that "the man who does not come short of the gods in virtue, is equally happy with Jupiter, even when he puts an end to his own life, provided he be a wise man." Chrysippus declares, that "as it is proper and becoming for Jupiter to glory in himself, and in his own life, and to think and speak magnificently of himself, so these things are becoming all good men, as being in nothing exceeded by Jupiter." Seneca says, "that a wise man lives upon an equality with the gods;" and asserts, that "God does not exceed the wise man in happiness, though he does in age;" he adds, "that there is one thing in which the wise man excels God, that God is wise by the benefit of nature, not by his own choice." Sextus represents the wise man as valuing and admiring himself above Jupiter, because "Jupiter cannot make use of worldly things, the wise man will not." The same hell-born pride appears in their high pretensions to self-sufficiency. Epictetus says, "The condition and character of a philosopher is, that he expects all that might profit or hurt him only from himself." Seneca represents it as needless to apply to the gods by prayer,

* Epict. cited by Leland, p. ii c. 9.

since it is in a man's own power to make himself happy; and referring to virtue says, "This is the chief good, which, if thou possessest, thou wilt begin to be a companion of the gods, not a suppliant to them." Indeed, at other times, he and other Stoics contradicted themselves on the subject of prayer. The Stoics esteemed humility a vice; and carried their pride so far that Heraclitus, a philosopher much admired among them, said, "I shall not build altars to others, but others to me;" and that great philosopher Plautinus, when invited by Ameleius to assist at a sacrifice he was about to offer to the gods, answered, "It is for them to come to me, not for me to go to them."* How men, influenced by such a spirit would treat the humbling doctrines of the Gospel it is not difficult to conjecture.

8. Modern infidels have encouraged suicide, and ancient heathen philosophers did the same. Hume represents suicide as the turning a few ounces of blood out of their proper channel. Marcus Antoninus represents it in the same trivial manner. "If my house be smoky, I go out of it, and why is this looked upon as a great matter?" Epictetus, the two Plinies, and others, approved of it; and Seneca extols Cato's murder of himself as a most glorious action. In fact, the Stoics maintained that it was not only lawful, but a duty in some cases for a wise man to despatch himself.†

Drunkenness is frequently a kind of gradual suicide, and sinks man lower than the brute creation. This vice was practised or approved by many of the most distinguished heathen philosophers. Zeno, the celebrated founder of the Stoics, is represented as a great drinker. Chrysippus died of a surfeit, through drinking wine too freely. Seneca recommends occasional drunkenness, and observes that Solon and Arcesilas in-

* Leland, p. ii. c. 11. passim. † Ib. p. ii. c. 11. passim.

dulged themselves in it. Plutarch declares that Cato of Utica spent whole nights in drinking; and the Stoics maintained, that a wise man might be drunken and his body disordered with wine, but that it could not hurt his mind.*

9. The Stoics professed to teach mutual benevolence, yet other parts of their system were calculated to produce the most hard-hearted indifference to the wants and miseries of man. Epictetus, one of their most grave and judicious authors, having mentioned what he says are called great events, namely, wars, and the destruction of men and cities, asks, "What great matter is there in all this? Nothing. What great matter is there in the death of numbers of oxen, numbers of sheep, or in the burning or pulling down numbers of nests of storks or swallows?" He affirms that these cases are perfectly alike. "The bodies of men are destroyed, and the bodies of sheep and oxen. The houses of men are burnt, and the houses or nests of storks. What is there great or dreadful in all this?" Seneca says, "A wise man is not afflicted by the loss of his friends or children;" and he reckons among the things which should not grieve him, "the besieging of his country, the death of his children, and the slavery of his parents." Epictetus allows a person to groan with one in affliction; but says, "Take heed however not to groan inwardly too." They might put on the appearance of compassion, but must take care to feel none. The same writer compares the death of a friend to the breaking of an old pipkin, and says, "Do you not send and buy a new one?"†

10. After this hasty survey of the principles and practices of ancient heathens, we may with propriety glance at those of modern infidels. Voltaire says, that "the

* Leland, p. ii. c. 11. passim.

† Ib. p. ii. c. 10. passim.

religion of the pagans consisted in nothing but morality and festivals.”* What their morality was, the preceding statements show. The morality of their infidel admirers greatly resembles theirs. Lord Herbert, the father of modern infidels, declares, that the indulgence of lust and of anger is no more to be blamed than the thirst occasioned by the dropsy. Hume maintains that there are no solid arguments to prove the existence of a God, and that it is unreasonable to believe God to be wise and good; that pride and self-valuation are virtues; that self-murder is lawful and commendable; that adultery must be practised if we would obtain all the advantages of life; that female infidelity (or adultery) when known is a small thing, when unknown nothing. That the external world does not exist, or that its existence may be reasonably doubted; that the universe exists in the mind, and that the mind does not exist. Lord Bolingbroke teaches, that ambition, the desire of power, avarice, and sensuality may be lawfully gratified, if they can be gratified safely; that man’s chief end is to gratify the appetites and inclinations of the flesh; that modesty is inspired by mere prejudice; that adultery is no violation of the religion of nature; and that there is no wrong in lewdness, except in the highest incest.† Diderot advised his friend Wilkes to associate with women of abandoned character.‡ Voltaire, in latter life, doubted of the existence of any God. Toland believed the world to be God.§ Godwin maintains that marriage is an improper monopoly. Tindal makes the doctrine of forgiving injuries an objection to the Gospel morality.|| Bayle approves of revenge. Chubb

* Hist. Louis XIV. † Dwight on Infidel Philosophy, Sermon 1. ‡ Letter of Diderot in Sir William Jones’s Life. § Leland, p. ii. c. 8.

|| Dwight, an author to whom I am indebted for various statements included in this section.

thinks prayer improper, and perhaps displeasing to the Deity.* Many or most modern infidels have denied the immortality of the soul, and a state of future retribution; and the National Assembly of France, when composed of infidels, declared death an eternal sleep.

Were such principles to be brought into general action, what a scene of debauchery, desolation, and vice would this world become! Referring to the indulgence allowed licentious passions in the doctrines of infidels, an excellent writer well remarks, "Lewdness alone, extended as their doctrines extend it, would exterminate every moral feeling from the human breast, and every moral and virtuous action from the human conduct; Sodom would cease to be a proverbial name; and Gomorrah would be remembered only to wonder at her unhappy lot, and to drop the tear of sympathy upon her ashes."

11. Where men, whatever at other times they may talk of virtue, adopt and teach such principles as those detailed in the last section, it is natural to expect that their practice will resemble their doctrines. And it has done so.

"Herbert, Hobbes, Shaftsbury, Woolston, Tindal, Chubb, and Bolingbroke were all guilty of the vile hypocrisy of professing to love and reverence Christianity, while they were employed in no other design than to destroy it. Such faithless professions, such gross violations of truth, in Christians, would have been proclaimed to the universe by these very writers as infamous desertions of principle and decency. Are they less infamous in themselves? All hypocrisy is detestable; but I know of none so detestable as that which is coolly written, with full premeditation, by a man of talents, assuming the character of a moral and religi-

* Dwight, p. i. c. 17.

ous instructor, a minister, a prophet of the truth of the infinite God.

“The morals of Rochester and Wharton need no comment. Woolston was a gross blasphemer. Blount solicited his sister-in-law to marry him, and, being refused, shot himself. Tindal was originally a protestant, then turned papist, then protestant again, merely to suit the times, and was at the same time infamous for vice in general, and the total want of principle. He is said to have died with this prayer in his mouth, ‘If there is a God, I desire that he may have mercy on me.’ Hobbes wrote his *Leviathan* to serve the cause of Charles I., but finding him fail of success, he turned it to the defence of Cromwell, and made a merit of this fact to the usurper, as Hobbes himself unblushingly declared to Lord Clarendon. Morgan had no regard to truth; as is evident from his numerous falsifications of Scripture, as well as from the vile hypocrisy of professing himself a Christian in those very writings in which he labours to destroy Christianity. Voltaire, in a letter now remaining, requested his friend D’Alembert to tell for him a direct and palpable lie, by denying that he was the author of the *Philosophical Dictionary*. D’Alembert in his answer informed him, that he had told the lie. Voltaire has indeed expressed his own moral character perfectly in the following words: ‘Monsieur Abbe, I must be read, no matter whether I am believed or not!’ He also solemnly professed to believe the catholic religion, although at the same time he doubted the existence of a God. Hume died as a fool dieth. The day before his death he spent in a pitiful and affected unconcern about this tremendous subject, playing at whist, reading Lucian’s dialogues, and making silly attempts at wit concerning his interview with Charon, the heathen ferry-man of Hades.

“It will easily be supposed that my information concerning the private lives of these men must be distant and imperfect ; what has been said will, however, furnish any one at all acquainted with the human character, with just ideas of their morality. I shall only add, that Rousseau (Jean Jacques) is asserted to have been guilty of gross theft, perjury, fornication, and adultery ; and of abjuring and assuming, alternately, the catholic and the protestant religion, neither of which he believed.”*

Rousseau himself confesses his thieving, and other vices. As for Paine, if possible, he was worse in his morals than even Rousseau ; and such a filthy and disgusting drunkard, that in the latter part of his life it was difficult to find a person that would take the care of him.

12. There is no doubt that, among the merely nominal professors of Christianity, a dreadful mass of vice exists ; yet among those who never felt the saving power of religion, multitudes have a curb placed on their vices by the Christian system. Where infidelity prevails, this check is removed, and men precipitate themselves headlong into the lowest sinks of iniquity. France, after the revolution, when infidelity triumphed presented an awful illustration of this remark. “In the republican year ending September 23, 1803, by the report of the prefect of police to the grand judge for the district of Paris, the number of suicides was, men 490, women 167, total 657. Of persons murdered, men 81, women 69, total 150. Of divorces 644. Of murderers executed 155. Among those executed were seven fathers who had poisoned their children ; ten husbands who murdered their wives ; six wives who

* Dwight on infidel Philosophy.

poisoned their husbands; and fifteen children who murdered their parents.”*

That well-known writer, Zimmerman, has furnished an awful account of the effect of infidel principles at Berlin. He observes that the king (Frederic) wished his subjects to think freely; and that every thing in morals and religion “degenerated into a kind of mental anarchy, both at court, and in the city. Notwithstanding the situation of affairs, Frederic never showed any inclination for restoring order; and the result was, that irreligion and deism became fashionable. Some of those men, who called themselves enlightened, opposed every restraint on opinions; and enlightened women set no bounds on their inclinations and passions.” They accordingly indulged freely and unblushingly in the grossest licentiousness.

“Several of the women were unfaithful to their husbands, because they were deists, that is, so very enlightened women. Female infidelity and divorces became as common at Berlin, as they were at the most corrupted period of the Roman empire. Some of the most enlightened people of fashion instituted dances in which they danced naked. This pretended light made no where so much progress as at Potsdam. The principles of deism, and this progress of reason, were there carried to such a length, as some officers of the king’s household informed me, that, during the last ten years, above three hundred people had committed suicide at Potsdam only.”†

13. And now, having surveyed that divinely benevolent system, that would change the desert of this world into the garden of the Lord, and having contrasted with it the impurity, folly, and vice encouraged by

* Dwight’s Theology, Sermon 31.

† Zimmerman’s interesting conversations between Frederick the Third, &c.

ancient heathen and modern infidel philosophers, are you not indeed ready to bind the Gospel to your heart? These systems are so opposite, that both cannot come from the same source. Which is from heaven, and which from hell? Compare, I will not say the character of Jesus, I will not for a moment degrade my Lord, by suggesting a comparison between his spotless excellence, and the polluted beings heathenism and infidelity produces; better were it to compare the light of eternal day with the gloom of the infernal prison; but compare his precepts with the precepts of the wisest philosophers that knew him not, and O what a glorious attestation must every unprejudiced mind see springing from the comparison, to the divine origin of his instructions! Compare the character and instructions of his apostles, in themselves but erring mortal men, with those of the most distinguished heathen philosophers; Paul's humility with Plato's pride; their chaste purity with the infamous licentiousness of Solon and Zeno, and Xenophon and Diogenes, and even of Socrates himself; their temperance in practice and precept with the philosophers' drunkenness; their patience under suffering with the cowardly suicide philosophers encouraged; their benevolent love with the hard, unfeeling apathy of Seneca and Epictetus; and all their elevated representations of God, and love to him, with the paltry gods these philosophers, at least in profession, adored; and the inhuman and polluted rites, by which those gods were worshipped; do this, and unless you love darkness rather than light because your deeds are evil, you cannot hesitate which system came from hell, and which from heaven. If you would pursue the comparison further, contrast the doctrines and characters of the apostles with those of modern infidels; the holy instructions of the former with the bane-

ful doctrines of the latter; the salutary food they offer to your soul with the dry husks and poison which Hume presents; their open sincerity with the gross hypocrisy of Herbert and Hobbes, and Tindal and Bolingbroke; their love and reverence for God with the blasphemies of Woolston and Voltaire; their almost blameless lives with the abominable profligacy of Rousseau and Paine: and their peaceful departure, exemplified in the language of one of them, "I know whom I have believed—I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day," with the pitiful death of Hume endeavouring to utter some contemptible jests in his last hours, about his interview with Charon the heathen ferryman of Hades; make this contrast with an unprejudiced mind, and it will be so plain in your view, that the unlettered men of Galilee, as much in real worth excel these self-important philosophers, as it is plain that health is better than the plague, virtue than vice, light than darkness, and smiling plenty than desolating famine.

14. There is indeed one other prevalent religious system in the world, which has not yet been noticed on this occasion; it is the system of Mahomet. With respect to him, it may be sufficient to observe that he furnishes in his own writings enough to prove him an impious impostor. He professes great respect to the character of Jesus, and describes him as the chief of all prophets, and the Word of God. He speaks of his miraculous powers, as well as those of his disciples, and particularly of his raising dead persons to life.* And thus, in allowing Jesus to be sent from God, he

* Kor. c. 3.

granted enough to overthrow his own system, which is so different from that of him whom he allows to have been the Word of God. Perhaps it may be useful to state a few more brief particulars on this subject.

Mahomet was born about six hundred years after the death of Christ. After having obtained some disciples, he at length had recourse to arms; and inspiring his soldiers with an enthusiastic valour, carried desolation and destruction wherever he went. On one occasion, in cold blood, he ordered seven hundred prisoners to be beheaded, under the most aggravating circumstances of cruelty. His religion was propagated by the sword. The alternative proposed to vanquished nations, was death or conversion to his religion. His precepts to his followers were, "Kill the idolaters wherever ye shall find them, and take them prisoners wherever ye shall find them; and besiege them, and lay wait for them in every convenient place. When ye encounter the unbelievers, strike off their heads, until ye have made a great slaughter of them; and bind them in bonds. Whoso fighteth for God's true religion, God will not suffer his works to perish." Thus was the system spread abroad by Mahomet and his successors.

Mahomet in his own life was debauched to excess; professing that he had a permission from God to cohabit, not merely with more wives than others, but with his nieces, and any believing women. He permitted his followers to have four wives, and to indulge vicious inclinations with as many women as they could maintain. He makes the chief duty of his disciples to consist in external ablutions, and stated repetitions of prayer, with some appointed ceremonies; and these he extends to the life to come. He maintained that there will be marriage in the other world, and repre-

sents gross and debasing sensuality as the happiness of heaven. This system universally produces a fierce, bloody, intolerant disposition, and is the parent of ignorance, cruelty, and oppression.

It is surely unnecessary to make a comparison between this system and Christianity, to prove which is divine.

15. To what has been offered on the divine origin of the blessed Gospel, permit me now to add the testimonies of some of its friends and some of its enemies. It has been said,

“Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view,
Who stand upon the threshold of the new.”

The testimonies of Christians near death have peculiar force, and not less weighty are the mournful confessions of expiring infidels.

Come then, my friend, into the Christian's dying chamber. See in that chair, designed for ease, but not easy to him, a patient sufferer, worn out with pain and disease. He is dying. Mark his words: “How thankful am I for death, as it is the passage through which I go to the Lord and Giver of eternal life, and as it frees me from all the misery which you see me now endure, and which I am willing to endure as long as God thinks fit; for I know that He will, by and by, in his own good time, dismiss me from the body. These afflictions are but for a moment, and then comes an eternal weight of glory. O! welcome, welcome death! thou mayest well be reckoned among the treasures of the Christian; to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy most holy and comfortable word, for mine eyes have seen thy most precious and comfortable salvation.—Here is my cordial; and what are all the cordials given to support the dying, in comparison to that which arises from the

promises of salvation by Christ? This, this supports me!"

Look at him again; the power of speech is almost gone, yet hear his dying lips utter one expression more, "PRECIOUS SALVATION."* The conflict is over, he is gone. Let us go hence. There is another chamber of death; behold the expiring sufferer that lies upon that bed†—Listen, he is speaking to a young heir of nobility and wealth.

"You see the situation I am in; I have not many days to live; I am glad you have an opportunity of witnessing the tranquillity of my last moments. But it is not tranquillity and composure alone; it is joy and triumph; it is complete exultation."—Observe his features kindle, his voice rise, while pointing to a Bible he adds, "And whence does this exultation spring?—From that book—from that book, too much neglected indeed, but which contains invaluable treasures! treasures of joy and rejoicing! for it makes us certain that this mortal shall put on immortality."

Let us enter the chamber in which another Christian dies. He has devoted his days to the study and illustration of the scriptures. He has exposed the sophistries of the infidel Hume, and shown his vaunted arguments against the Gospel to be utterly falacious and contemptible. The end of his days is now at hand; death is putting to the severest test the value of the principles he has advocated. Near him are his wife and niece weeping in the prospect of his immediate dissolution. Just now he seemed expiring, but a cordial has unexpectedly revived him. The power of speech for a few minutes returns. Now he looks on his mourning relatives, and tells them, that he wonders to see their countenances covered with tears in the apprehen-

* Hervey.

† William Leechman.

sion of his departure, and adds, "At that instant I felt my mind in such a state, in the thoughts of my immediate dissolution, that I can express my feelings in no other way, than by saying that I WAS IN A RAPTURE."*

He too is gone to rest. Shall we go to one other house of death? and see one Christian more expire? There another dies! he has devoted his life to the service of the gospel; he has advocated by his pen the holy cause of Jesus; he has exposed the abominations of paganism, and the sophistry and vicious maxims of infidels. Now mark his closing testimony. "I give my dying testimony to the truth of Christianity. The promises of the Gospel are my support and consolation: they, alone, yield me satisfaction in a dying hour. I am not afraid to die. The Gospel of Christ has raised me above the fear of death; for I know that my Redeemer liveth."†

Now let us wander to a very different scene. Let us enter the chambers where infidels are dying. There lies Voltaire. He has long opposed the Gospel; and concluded his letters to infidel friends, with "Crush the wretch." But now he is overwhelmed with horror and despair; not a gleam of hope breaks in upon his soul. He curses his former companions in infidelity, and exclaims, "Retire! It is you that have brought me to my present state! Begone! I could have done without you all; but you could not exist without me! And what a wretched glory have you procured me!"

Now he exclaims, "O Christ! O Jesus Christ!" Then utters with horror, "I am abandoned by God and man." Alternately he supplicates and blasphemes the God he has denied. Wretched man! wretched fame which infidelity obtained him!‡ Let us enter

* George Campbell.

† John Leland.

‡ See Simpson's Plea, &c.

the dying chamber of another infidel;* he is dying a martyr; a martyr to drunkenness and brandy. No bright hopes cheer the last moments of this debauched apostle of infidelity. Ask him,—“What think you of Jesus now?” his mournful moans, his bitter cries, give a forced but unwilling reply: he exclaims, “O Lord, help me! O Lord, help me! O Christ, help me! O Christ, help me!” He confesses to one, who had burnt his Age of Reason, that he wished all who had read it had been as wise as he; and adds, “If ever the devil had an agent on earth I have been one.” And when apprehending immediate dissolution, exclaims, “I think I can say, what they make Jesus Christ to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” At length he dies, but notwithstanding all the horrors of conscience, a stranger to real penitence; having probably sinned that sin which admits of no repentance.

We need go no further; these apostles of infidelity, like malefactors confessing their crimes at the gallows, have, in their dying horrors, confessed that they could not disbelieve that religion they had laboured to destroy. Whence the cries, O Christ! O Jesus Christ! Lord, help me! Christ, help me! but from an inward conviction, that Christianity is divine. They had doubtless been against the Bible, because the Bible was against them; and now, like the demons the Saviour ejected, they confessed him, in whose mercy they could no longer find a part.

* T. Paine See Cheetham's Life of this man, &c.

A P P E N D I X .

I.—TO THOSE WHO DOUBT THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY.

As you have now surveyed the evidence for the divine origin of Christianity which has been adduced in the preceding treatise, the question may be proposed, What is the effect upon your mind? Do you still hesitate to acknowledge the claims of the Gospel, and to confess its divinity? If you do; by all that is dear to you, be persuaded to continue your investigation till you can *refute* the evidence offered for Christianity, or till you yield to its force. This is what wisdom would dictate if there were but *one* species of evidence; but when there are *so many*, when miracles—prophecies—the holy tendency of the religion—the acknowledgments of its enemies—and the testimonies of millions of its martyred friends, all unite in its support, and when, if it is divine, your eternal state is connected with your decision, O trifle not with a question so important. Trifling is madness here. But if such is mere neglect, what language can describe the guilt and infatuation of treating with contempt a religion which you cannot but feel *may*, after all the ridicule that scoffers can cast upon it, prove divine. If ever inclined to this extreme of wickedness, O consider you cannot “pull down the spacious fabric of heaven, or undermine the profound abyss of hell, by a profane scoff,” nor can you dethrone the Son of God by all your “philosophic wit called argument,” nor by the grosser sarcasms of hardened impiety. Perhaps you laugh; but will you laugh in misery? Perhaps you jest; but will you jest in hell? Perhaps you call that place of woe a bugbear; will you on a dying bed? did Voltaire? did Paine? did the unhappy infidel, who cried, “O thou blasphemed, yet most indulgent Lord God! hell itself is a refuge, if it hide me from thy frown!”

O listen not to the delusions of unbelief and the suggestions of an infernal foe. Rather seek mercy. Flee from the wrath to come.

Is not death already clad in terrors? Then turn to him who would take its sting away.

It has been the fashion with some writers against Christianity, to represent it as needless, and to assert that human reason is a sufficient guide to virtue and happiness. What were the instructions of these who had but this guide, and who were destitute of revelation, let the last chapter answer; and what are their instructions now, let the state of modern pagan nations show. Some modern enemies of the Gospel have been the professed admirers of savage life, which has been cantingly represented as a state of pure nature. In the hearing of that man of gigantic intellect, Dr. Samuel Johnson, a gentleman quoted the words of an officer who had lived in the wilds of America, with an air of admiration as if they had been truly philosophical. "Here am I, free and unrestrained, amidst the rude magnificence of nature, with this Indian woman at my side, and this gun with which I can procure food when I want it: what more can be desired for human happiness?" Johnson answered, "Do not allow yourself, sir, to be imposed upon by such gross absurdity. It is sad stuff; it is brutish. If a bull could speak, he might as well exclaim, Here am I, with this cow, and this grass, what being can enjoy greater felicity?"

The same great man said, when speaking of a person who maintained that there is no difference between virtue and vice, "Why, sir, if the fellow does not think as he speaks, he is lying, and I see not what honour he can propose to himself from having the character of a liar; but if he do really believe that there is no distinction between virtue and vice, why, sir, when he leaves our house, let us count our spoons."

Perhaps you urge that objections may be started against Christianity. True; but there is nothing against which human ingenuity, *combined with human folly*, cannot raise various objections. If you will believe no truth, against which objections are started, you must believe that neither God, nor man, nor earth nor heaven exist. Soon after the conquest of Canada by this country, Dr. Johnson was conversing respecting some who deny the divine origin of Christianity, when he said, "It is always easy to be on the negative side. If a man were to deny that there is salt upon the table you could not reduce him to an absurdity. Come let us try this a little further. I deny that Canada is taken. I can support my denial by pretty

good arguments. 'The French are a much more numerous people than we, and it is not likely they would allow us to take it.' 'But the ministry have assured us in all the formality of a gazette, that it is taken.' 'Very true, but the ministry have put us to an enormous expense by the war in America, and it is their interest to persuade us, that we have got something for our money.' 'But the fact is confirmed by thousands of men who were at the taking of it.' 'Ay, but these men have still more interest in deceiving us. They don't want that you should think that the French have beat them, but that they have beat the French.' Now suppose you should go over and find that it really is taken, that would only satisfy yourself, for when you came home we will not believe you, we will say that you have been bribed. Yes, sir, notwithstanding all these plausible objections, we have no doubt that Canada is really taken. Such is the weight of common testimony; how much stronger are the evidences of the Christian religion!"

On another occasion, in connection with some other weighty observations, Mr. Boswell describes him as referring to the same subject. Of a gentleman who was mentioned, Johnson said, "I have not met with any man for a long time who has given me such general displeasure, he is totally unfixed in his principles, and wants to puzzle other people." "I (*Boswell*) said that his principles had been poisoned by a noted infidel writer but that he was nevertheless a benevolent good man." *Johnson*. "We can have no dependence upon that instinctive, that constitutional benevolence and goodness which is not founded upon principle. I grant you, that such a man may be a very amiable member of society; I can conceive him placed in such a situation that he is not much tempted to deviate from what is right; and, as every man prefers virtue when there is not some strong incitement to transgress its precepts, I can conceive him doing nothing wrong: but if such a man stood in need of money, I should not like to trust him. Hume, and other sceptical innovators, are vain men, who will gratify themselves at any expense; truth will not afford sufficient food to their vanity; so they have betaken themselves to error. If I could have allowed myself to gratify my vanity at the expense of truth, what fame might I have acquired! Every thing which Hume has advanced against Christianity had passed through my mind long before he wrote. Always remember this; that after a system is once settled by positive evi-

dence, a few partial objections ought not to shake it. The human mind is so limited, that it cannot take in all the parts of a subject, so that there may be objections raised against any thing.

If you have doubts respecting the divinity of Christianity, sit down to the question of its heavenly origin with a candid mind. A great and good man once observed, "The Bible will treat you as you treat the Bible." If you come to it for instruction, you will find it; if you seek consolation, you will obtain it; but if you come to hunt for objections and to cavil, God will permit you to cavil and to find objections there. Even Byron, when he drew near eternity, could write:—

"Within this awful volume lies
The mystery of myrteries.
Happiest they of human race
To whom their God has given grace
To read, to fear, to hope, to pray,
To lift the latch, and force the way,
But better ne'er to have been born,
Than read to doubt, and read to scorn."

If you have doubts, and with an honest mind would pursue the important inquiry before you, you may find much information in a little compass, in such works as Paley's Evidences, Bogue's Essay, Watson's Apologies, Doddridge's three Sermons on the Evidences of Christianity, Gregory's Letters, &c.

II.—TO THOSE WHO DOUBT THE PECULIAR DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY.

Perhaps you acknowledge the divine origin of the Bible, and profess yourself a Christian, but you object to the distinguishing peculiarities of the Gospel, because, in some things, they exceed the power of human comprehension. The mysteries of the Trinity and the incarnation of the Son of God confound you, and are stumbling blocks to you.

If this be the state of your mind, consider that these are subjects of pure revelation; all our knowledge of them must come from God, who alone is fully acquainted with what concerns his own nature and proceedings. And where revelation is concerned, humility of mind is an indispensable requisite for a satisfactory investigation of divine truth. If you wish to be taught of God, you must submit the powers of boasted reason to him. *You are to employ those powers to judge of the evidences which prove Christianity a religion from Heaven; but when once that conviction is obtained, it then becomes your duty to believe whatever God declares, however incomprehensible; on this obvious principle, that he is acquainted with the truths revealed in his word infinitely better than his creatures can be.* To see men trying the doctrines of revelation by what they are pleased to term the dictates of reason, and then rejecting divine truths because unable to comprehend them by their insect powers, may remind us of the poet's words:

“The moles and bats in full assembly find,
On special search, the keen-ey'd eagle blind.”

God leaves the proud to wander in their own delusions, and to perish in the folly of their boasted wisdom. He resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. He knoweth the thoughts of the wise that they are vain. If you would know his will, you must inquire for truth with child-like simplicity; must desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby. Jesus praised God that he had hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes. If to become one of these babes, in child-like teachableness and simplicity, is too humbling for you, you are no scholar in the school of Christ. Go, then, and, “Indian-like,” adore your idol reason. Go join the upstart ranks of the wise, and compliment each other on your wisdom, and on your superiority to the credulous crowd, who are so simple as to suppose that God knows his own nature better than they. Go spread your philosophic cobwebs; like other cobwebs, they will last their hour; but remember, the rough hand of death will sweep you and them together to destruction; and Heaven will pour down eternal blessings on the babe in Christ whom you despise, when, notwithstanding all your fancied worth and wisdom, it has no blessing left for you.

You object to the doctrine of the Trinity as mysterious. Point, then, to some object in nature that is not mysterious, before you hesitate to receive the declarations of the scriptures for describing a *mysterious God*.

A blade of grass contains mysteries that no philosopher can unravel. Should the nature of the Creator of the universe be less mysterious than that of a blade of grass ! Look at yourself, you are a world of mysteries. What is your body ? You cannot answer. What is your spirit ? You are still more unable to reply, and can no more comprehend your own spirit, than you can the God of heaven. How does spirit act on matter ? Your limbs move at the direction of your mind. Still you can give no satisfactory statement. You are engulfed in mystery. Does your nature consist of a body and a spirit merely, or do a body, an animal soul, and an immortal spirit unite in you ? Even this you cannot answer, nor tell whether you yourself are compounded of two or of three distinct parts or principles. Let man, then, comprehend and explain his own nature before he endeavours to unfold that of the infinite God ; then it will be soon enough to doubt the divinity of Jesus, because it is a subject fraught with mystery. On this subject an able writer remarks, "As to the doctrine of the Trinity it is even more amazing than that of the Incarnation ; yet, prodigious and amazing as it is, such is the incomprehensible nature of God, that I believe it will be extremely difficult to prove from thence that it cannot possibly be true. The point seems to be above the reach of reason, and too wide for the grasp of human understanding. However, I have often observed, in thinking of the eternity and immensity of God ; of his remaining from eternity to the production of the first creature, without a world to govern, or a single being to manifest his goodness to ; of the motives that determined him to call his creatures into being ; why they operated when they did, and not before ; of his raising up intelligent beings, whose wickedness and misery he foresaw ; of the state in which his relative attributes, justice, bounty, and mercy, remained through an immense space of duration, before he had produced any creatures to exercise them towards ; in thinking, I say, of these unfathomable matters, and of his raising so many myriads of spirits, and such prodigious masses of matter out of nothing ; I am lost and astonished as much as in the contemplation of the Trinity. There is but a small distance in the scale of

being between a mite and me : although that which is food to me is a world to him, we mess, notwithstanding, on the same cheese, and breathe the same air ; yet how incomprehensible must my nature and actions be to him ! He can take but a small part of me with his eye at once ; and it would be the work of his life to make the tour of my arm ; I can eat up his world, immense as it seems to him, at a few meals : he, poor reptile ! cannot tell but there may be a thousand distinct beings or persons, such as mites can conceive, in so great a being. By this comparison, I find myself vastly capacious and comprehensive ! and begin to swell still bigger with pride and high thoughts ; but the moment I lift up my mind to God, between whom and me there is an infinite distance, then I myself become a mite, or something infinitely less ; I shrink almost into nothing. I can follow him in but one or two steps in his lowest and plainest works, till all becomes mystery and matter of amazement to me. How, then, shall I comprehend God himself ? How shall I understand his nature, or account for his actions ? In these, he plans for a boundless scheme of things ; whereas I can see but an inch before me ; in that he contains what is infinitely more inconceivable than all the wonders of his creation put together ; and I am plunged in astonishment and blindness when I attempt to stretch my wretched inch of line along the immensity of his nature. Were my body so large that I could sweep all the fixed stars, visible from this world in a clear night, and grasp them in the hollow of my hand ; and were my soul capacious in proportion to so vast a body ; I should, notwithstanding, be infinitely too narrow-minded to conceive his wisdom when he forms a fly ; and how, then, should I think of conceiving of himself ? No : this is the highest of all impossibilities. His very lowest work checks and represses my vain contemplations, and holds them down at an infinite distance from him. When we think of God in this light we can easily conceive it possible, that there may be a trinity of persons in his nature."

The incarnation and sufferings of the Son of God are indeed a subject replete with wonder. That he who was rich for our sakes should become poor, that we through his poverty might be rich ; should appear as "God manifest in the flesh," is indeed mysterious grace. The transcendent excellence of this wonder of love has awakened

gratitude in many hearts which has been continued through life, and will last to eternity. This forms the brightest glory of those

“Doctrines that nerv’d the martyr’s heart,
And ecstasy to heaven impart;
That live in every angel’s song,
And glow on every ransom’d tongue.”

If we then permit the greatness of this love, transcending all thought and expression, to become a reason for doubting its reality, or hesitating to yield to its influence, of what unutterably base ingratitude should we be guilty !

On this wonderful and interesting subject, Maclaurin’s Sermon on the Cross of Christ, published at the low price of two-pence, by the Religious Tract Society, is *eminently* calculated to impart the most beneficial instruction. Would you see the glories of the Saviour’s love exhibited with unusual power, read that sermon.

III.—TO NOMINAL CHRISTIANS.

Perhaps you are not an unbeliever, nor do you profess to doubt the great doctrines of the Gospel; but you are a mere nominal Christian, and a consequent trifler with eternal realities. It was the remark of a person once active in the busy world, when accused of being too serious, that every thing but man is serious. But there are situations in which triflers must feel. Take a midnight walk in yonder churchyard, and you may feel what you, perhaps, never felt before,—that the pursuits of this world are dreams, and life itself a vapour. While the solemn silence of those regions of the dead hushes every tumultuous passion, while the moon shines on the turf-covered graves, or by its light assists you on the stones to discern when it was said to those who sleep beneath, Your time shall be no more, surely you must ask yourself, Where am I? whither am I going? When this deep silence solemnizes the minds of the next age, when they mark the moon passing through the cloudless sky of future years, and shi-

ning on my grave, where shall I be fixed? These, who have mouldered here for ages, once resembled me, and I must soon resemble them.

“ They suffer'd—but their pangs are o'er ;
 Enjoy'd—but their delights are fled ;
 Had friends—their friends are now no more ;
 Had foes—their foes are dead.
 They saw whatever I have seen ;
 Encounter'd all that troubles me ;
 They were, whatever I have been ;
 They *are*, what *I shall be*.”

The cares and fears, the hopes and joys, that once were theirs, now distract and perplex or delight me; and when I have left all these to lie down in the dust of death, will fresh pains torment or fresh joys delight me, pains or joys not like those of shadowy life, but to extend through vast eternity? Yes, they will. And only the Lord Jesus, that Lord whom you call Saviour, but whom you slight, can lead you to mansions of peace. How unreasonable is your conduct in trifling with religion! a professèd believer, a *practical unbeliever*, for *such are all whose first concern is not to live to Christ*. Do you doubt the correctness of this assertion? permit me then to inquire, should you fear a threatening dagger? should you dread to swallow a bowl of poison? You know you would; but why? have you ever felt the miseries inflicted by a dagger or by poison? You have not. Why, then, would you fear them? You know the reason; because you believe, on the testimony of others, the dreadful effects of daggers and of poisons. You dread them through belief. Here you are a believer on human testimony. A greater than mortals, a greater than angels, the Lord Jesus Christ himself, declares that you are a lost creature, and tells you of scenes of misery to which sin leads, more dreadful than the most dreadful here. Of a world where eternal horror reigns; where miseries beyond description dwell; where, could they inflict a second death, daggers and poisons would be blessings indeed, blessings fought for more earnestly than crowns on earth! He tells you of an eternal hell, which sin has merited, and to which sin is sinking you, and do you believe? Oh! if you did, you would flee from the wrath to come.

A friend tells you of some important good that you may obtain: you follow it. Of some pleasures you may enjoy: you pursue them.

Why? Because you believe his word, and believe they will increase your satisfaction. Perhaps you are ill. An acquaintance tells you of a medicine that is an infallible antidote to your disorder: you take it. Why? have you ever tried its virtues? No: but you believe him who has. In all these cases you are a believer, and faith leads you to pursue desired good.

God tells you in his word that, pitying your misery, and concerned for your happiness, he gave his best beloved to suffer in your place. This divine Friend calls you to follow him, and tells you of pardon, peace, and Heaven. He assures you that eternal life is the heritage of his disciples. Now would he make you an heir of Heaven; but beyond the grave will never extend to you a pitying, helping hand. All this he declares to you in his word. You profess, perhaps, to believe it all, and, Oh dreadful, you slight it all. Do you believe him? What infatuation! what want of common sense to suppose you do! No! if you did, you would flee to the shelter of his cross, and find salvation there. No! if you did believe him, you would not prefer earth to Heaven, and a moment to eternity. No! if you did believe him, you would not continue dying of sin, and careless of the great Physician. Did you really believe what the Son of God reveals, you would follow him as your Guide, your Saviour, your all. And while you neglect this what are you but a practical infidel, and in one respect one of the worst kind of infidels? It is natural for those who reject his divine authority, to slight his discoveries, but you profess yourself his disciple, and yet, by a careless life, imitate the conduct of infidels!

Ah! what solemn scenes will soon open upon you! an endless world and all its endless joys or woes; the mighty Redeemer and the eternal God. Were there only a probability of that solemn world, it might be sufficient to make a reasonable creature indifferent to one so transitory and perishing as this; but here it is not barely probability, it is certainty; and yet will you grasp at the passing shadows of this world, and neglect the endless realities of the other! Now you say of a part of life, It is gone, yet you look forward, and hope for other years to come; but what will be your state, when looking backward, you must say, Time is gone: and looking forward Eternity is come. Oh that awful, that dreadful eternity! how will it torment the murderers of time! how will it teach the thoughtless sinner, and the mere nominal Christian, their folly and

their madness! Your conduct is not only unwise and unreasonable in professing to believe the Bible, yet neglecting religion, but your guilt is great, and your lot is wretched. Think of the love of the Lord Jesus, and how aggravated must your guilt be in neglecting him. When the apostle refers to this subject, he represents this love as incomprehensible: "that ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." We have reason to believe the Saviour's incarnation, the most amazing event that ever happened, even in the records of eternity; and to believe that through an eternity to come it will never have an equal.

Were "all the love of all the men that ever were or shall be on the earth, and all the love of all the angels in heaven, united in one heart, it would be a cold heart to that which was pierced with the soldier's spear." And do you neglect that Saviour who spread the heavens abroad, and created the earth beneath you? Do you indulge no thoughts of his love, or let any trifling folly drive such thoughts away? Do you forget the eternal bliss of heaven, and the bitter agonies and bloody sufferings of the compassionate Saviour? and forget all these for trifles so mean, that they would not drive from your thoughts one day of promised pleasure? and yet they can induce you to forget a gracious God, a crucified Saviour, and an eternal world. Ah! foolish creature and unwise, thus to requite the Lord and Giver of salvation!

Surely the motives that have been mentioned should be sufficient to lead you no longer to rest satisfied with being *nominally* a Christian, but to constrain you to devote yourself to God. But other motives may be urged. Think of the countless mercies of the Most High. God made you what you are, and gave you your exalted place in the scale of being. You might have been a brute, but he blessed you with a human form, and an immortal soul. You enjoy the use of reason. It is his gift. You might have been an idiot or a maniac. Do you possess hearing, speech, sight? Can you taste, feel, smell? It is he who has blessed you with these powers; you might have been deaf, dumb, and blind, unable to smell, or feel, or taste. Perhaps you were born to the enjoyment of wealth: consider that, but for his goodness, you might have been a beggar's or a gipsy's child. If not wealthy, you are probably placed in a situation which affords you many temporal comforts. He placed you there.

You might have been an Arab, wandering and famishing in burning deserts; a Koon-kee, dwelling with the wild beasts in dens or trees; a Bushman or a Hottentot, sunk almost to a level with the brute creation. You have had parents or friends, whose love cheered and blessed your early years. God gave them. You might have been born where heathenism destroys natural affection, and parents offer their children to Moloch. God has been kind in fixing your lot; and has he not been as kind in the dealings of his providence? Of how many comforts has he been the Giver! through how many years has he been your Preserver! Your body is formed like a delicate yet complicated machine, and one part disordered might have disorganized all the rest. Yet he has kept its parts in action, and preserved and regulated the whole.

Survey your past years. They have been years of mercy. He has watched over you by day and by night. How many days of ease have you enjoyed! How many nights of security have you passed, when, sunk in sleep and insensibility, you have had none to secure you but God! Have you enjoyed health? He gave it. Has sickness, if it visited you, yet made but a transient visit? He ordered its departure, raised you from a bed of pain, and brightened your pallid countenance with the returning bloom of health. Have you lived many years, and never, *even for a day*, been destitute of needful food and decent clothing? God has supplied these wants through all the days of those departed years. Have you, from the moment of your birth to this present hour, had friends who have been the solace of your life? God gave those friends. Perhaps you have seen twenty, thirty, or more years roll away; can you say of one day in all those years, That day God forgot me—that day I had nothing from his bounty? You know you cannot; though you doubtless can say, I forgot him for many long rebellious years. Through what changing scenes has he led you, and still been uniformly kind! and so kind that neither ingratitude nor rebellion has ever checked the stream of his mercies. He blessed you in childhood; he watched over you in youth; and if riper years have rolled over your head, he has crowned those years with all the mercies they have brought you. Through how many dangers has he led you! from how many storms has he sheltered you!

Kind in providence, has he not been kinder still in grace? How much has God done to make you happy for ever! Compare your

lot with the lot of millions ! your holy light with their degrading darkness ! Some compute six hundred millions of pagans to exist on earth. You might have been one, but God fixed your lot where the Gospel spreads a cheering day. There are perhaps one hundred millions of papists, most of them sunk in ignorance. Why are you not one ? Why were you not born where, instead of learning to adore God and the Lamb, you would have been taught to worship “silver saviours and saints of gold ?” and nursed up in superstition and vice, have lived the slave of sin, believing that you could purchase of antichrist a pardon for your crimes ? Have you a Bible ? Millions never saw its holy pages. Why have you that precious book ? God bestowed it on you !

But I address you as a partaker of still greater mercies. Think of God so loving the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, may not perish, but have everlasting life. Think of God commending his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us ; and O what miracles of love have been manifested to you ! Are these rich mercies in possession, richer in prospect, all the gift of that much injured, yet still benevolent Being, God, and can he expect, or can you be willing to offer less in return than all you have and are ? Has he given you life and health, a thousand comforts, and more than doubled all in giving Christ, and will you not devote to him yourself and your all ? Would he give you Heaven, and is it much to devote to him a span of time on earth ? O rather pray, Merciful God ! little, is the most I ever can devote to thee ! and let me not make that little less, by offering a heart but half set on thee, and offering a life but half devoted to thee ! Rather, O rather, whatever others do, enable me to offer to thee my heart, and my head, and my hands, my body and my soul, and all I have, and all I am, an unworthy and insignificant, yet a living, and, through Jesus Christ, an acceptable sacrifice !

Whatever you are, if you are not a humble follower of the Saviour, your state is fearful in the extreme. In those blessings that form the Christian’s portion, you have no share. God is not your reconciled Father. Jesus Christ is not your Saviour and Shepherd : Heaven is not your home. As sure as the scriptures are true, you are an heir of death, a slave of satan, a child of wrath, an enemy of God, a traveller to hell. Every moment you are on the brink of destruction. There is only the breath in your nostrils between you and hell ; and

nothing is wanting to sink you there but God's command. A cold, an accident, or almost any trifle may be sufficient to cut your thread of life, and plunge you in eternal despair. The place of misery is your own place, you are ready for it. Your sins are all unpardoned—wrath follows you—hell is waiting to receive you. Death, your dread foe, is drawing nigh. Your last moment, your last comfort, are approaching. O, my fellow sinner, think of eternity, never will that time arrive when your soul shall cease to live. Were one person to enjoy all the pleasure that has ever been enjoyed in this world, by all the millions that have lived, all that united would be but as an atom of delight, a moment of pleasure, compared with that enduring bliss, which ransomed souls possess in the kingdom of God. And were all the sufferings that through almost six thousand years have embittered so many lives, and broken so many hearts; were all the sickness and pains, and all the dying pangs of the countless millions that death has swept away; were all these united and poured upon one unhappy head, it would be less than a drop compared with those mountainous billows of misery which, in the world to come, will overwhelm every neglecter of the Son of God. These all would not form eternal sufferings, nor amount to everlasting sorrow. These immense sums of happiness or pain would have an end, but the joy or sorrow to which you are hastening can have none. How highly you value this fleeting life! How precious is even the uncertain prospect of a few years of peace and ease! How bitter are sufferings when no end of them can be seen! How bitter is it to the galley-slave to think, that the chain which binds him, binds him for life! How severe the sentence of perpetual imprisonment! were such your circumstances, how insupportable would the load of misfortune appear! These chains for life! this imprisonment for life! What tenfold bitterness would the words "for life," add to the prison and the chain. How great are sorrows when only death can end them! Oh what will eternal sorrow be! sorrows to which no death can ever bring relief! Oh what will be the wretched creature's lot who has through eternity to exclaim, "Mercy once wooed me, but mercy is gone for ever! God pitied me, but has now left me for ever! the Saviour I slighted is departed for ever! for ever! Oh that dreadful FOR EVER! Peace, and hope, and comfort, all have left me for ever! and now this hellish prison is my abode for ever! This dismal gloom! this eternal heartache, this tormenting flame, are my sad portion for

ever! O could that eternity be shortened! O could one hope gleam across the eternal gloom! O could death, though at the distance of infinite years, appear to end my sorrows and my being! but no such comfort can visit me! There is no gleam of hope in the distance of eternal night. There is no death that can end my being. The death I suffer is the death that never dies. God, and Christ, and hope, and mercy, and peace, and ease, are all gone! woe! woe is me! gone for ever and for ever!

Shall this be your lot? yours who are now reading this page? It must, it will, if you neglect the Lord Jesus Christ.

If through divine grace you devote yourself to God, and look to him to lead you in the way everlasting, then make his word your guide. Prize the Bible. If you read many books, still let the Bible be esteemed above them all; if but one, let that one be the Bible.

Let it never be forgotten by you, that those Christians, whose piety has shone with the brightest lustre, whose hopes have been fullest of immortality, are those who have loved and valued most the word of God. It is related of De Renty, a French nobleman of most eminent piety, that he used every day on his knees to read three chapters in the word of God. On the other hand, how many Christians, of even eminent piety, when leaving the world, have lamented their folly in not having studied the scriptures more, and human writings less. When that eminent Christian, James Hervey, who died in triumph, "apprehended himself to be near the close of life, with eternity full in view, he wrote to a friend at a distance to tell him what were his sentiments in that awful situation. 'I have been too fond,' said he, 'of reading every thing valuable and elegant that has been penned in our language, and been peculiarly charmed with the historians, orators, and poets of antiquity: but were I to renew my studies, I would take my leave of those accomplished trifles: I would resign the delights of modern wits, amusement, and eloquence, and devote my attention to the scriptures of truth. I would sit with much greater assiduity at my divine Master's feet, and desire to know nothing in comparison of Jesus Christ, and him crucified.'"

What is there in human science compared with the solemn discoveries of the Bible? Other books are for time, but this for eternity! Other knowledge amuses a few short moments here, this di-

rects to never-ending good hereafter. Other wisdom pleases or profits for the transient day of life: this is the source of unfailing blessings for infinite periods beyond the hour when stars and sun shall cease to shine. Other learning may gain the applause of a few frail creatures, whose applause must soon be hushed for ever by the hands of death; but divine knowledge will direct the soul to the raptures of eternal day, and insure the approbation of the King of kings, and the welcome congratulations of angelic myriads, in the presence of Him, who is, and who was, and who is to come; the Eternal, the Almighty. Thus as much as eternity excels time in importance, as much as an infinite life of bliss outweighs the advantages of a fleeting hour; so much the precious Bible excels in value all that orators, philosophers, historians and poets ever wrote; all that human wisdom ever inspired; all that a vain world ever extolled.

Perhaps after all that can be urged to gain your heart to God, you are one that *will* trifle with eternal things. If so, what remains for you but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. Oh mournful folly! sad infatuation! "The wretch that is condemned to die to-morrow cannot forget it," and can you, whose death is equally certain, though perhaps not quite so near, *can* you forget that Gospel which brings life and immortality to light, that religion which gives the only title to the mansions in the skies! Oh, if you now forget it, the time is coming, when you will do so no more. When the frame of nature shall be dissolved, when the heavens shall shrivel up like a scroll, and the vast world be sinking in final flames, when the great and mighty hills start from their places, and wretched men long to hide beneath their burning ruins: then you will not forget it. When standing with all the risen dead before the judgment-seat of the Lord Jesus, then you will not forget it; then whilst in awful silence you await your eternal doom you may recollect this very exhortation to receive the Saviour; and when fixed in your eternal home, amidst the wailings of unutterable despair, then you will never forget it.

IV.—TO THE SINCERELY PIOUS.

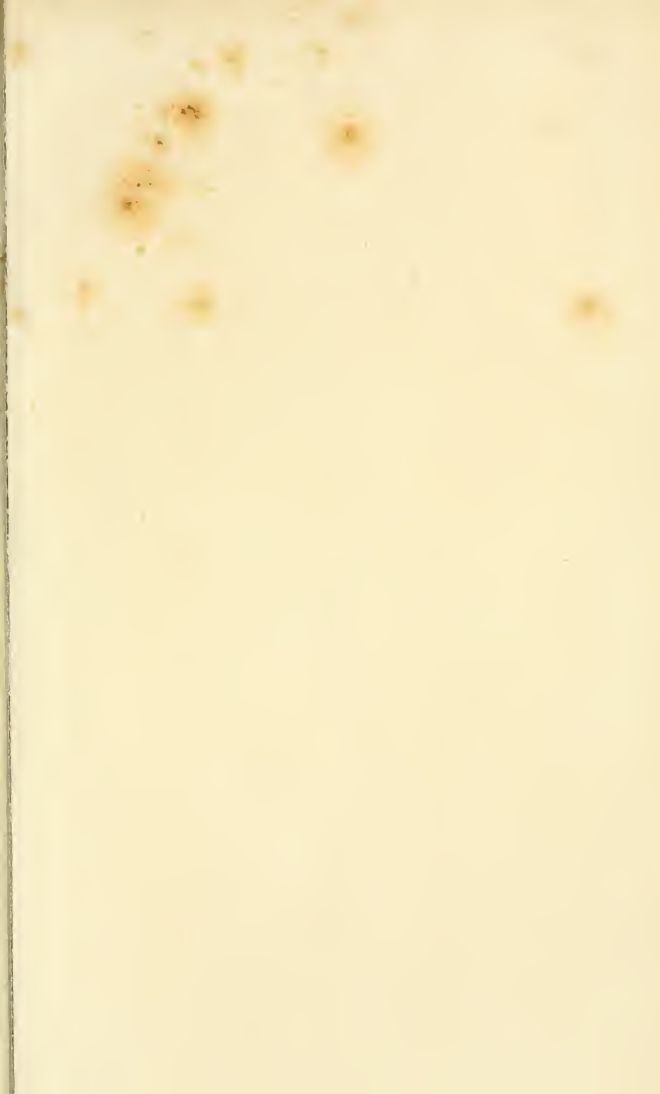
Perhaps the eye that reads this page is an eye that sees no glory like that it sees in Christ ; yet if you have reason to hope it is so, still it is needful often to commune with your own heart ; often to examine your own condition ; and often to look up in fervent prayer for grace to advance in the divine life. Let this little volume prompt you to *prize the Lord Jesus, as a believer*. A martyr, when asked if he loved not his wife and family, replied, "Yes, if the world were gold, and were mine to dispose of, I would give it to live with them, though it were but in prison ; yet my soul and Christ are dearer to me than all."

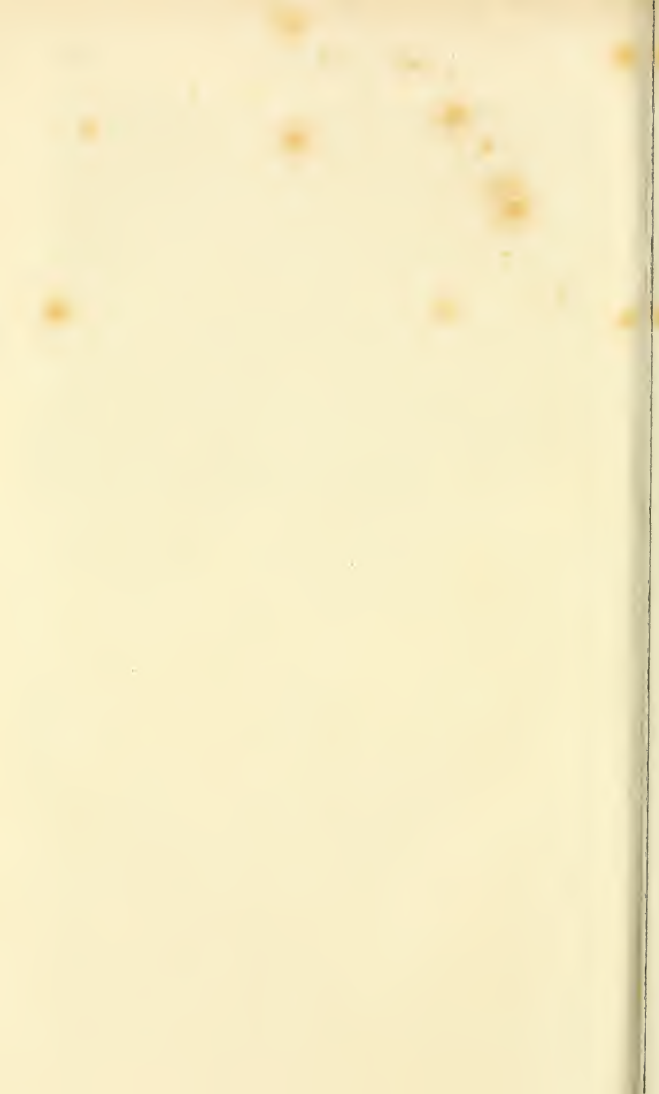
Is such your value for the Saviour ? Can you for his sake endure the frowns of friends ? the ridicule of former companions ? Can you deny yourself, your wisdom, your companions, your pleasures, your profits, your ease, your character, your liberty, your life, and sacrifice all that is dearest to your heart, for Jesus' sake ? If he esteems you wise, care you not who deems you foolish ; if he smiles, care you not who frowns ; if he approves, it is to you a little matter who condemns ; if he bless, it is to you comparatively a trifle, though all around you curse.

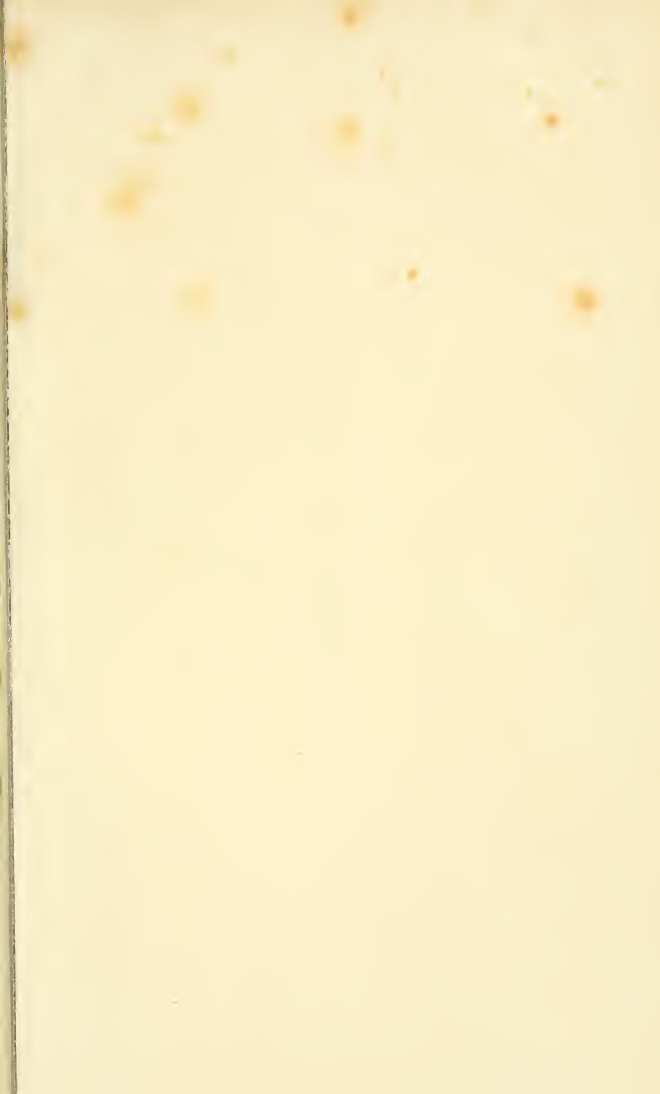
Live as a believer ; let it be your daily prayer that faith may govern your heart, direct your choice, rule your conduct, fire your love, win your desires, strengthen your hopes, and enable you to live on earth as a stranger travelling to Heaven. If it be genuine, if it be saving, these will be its effects.

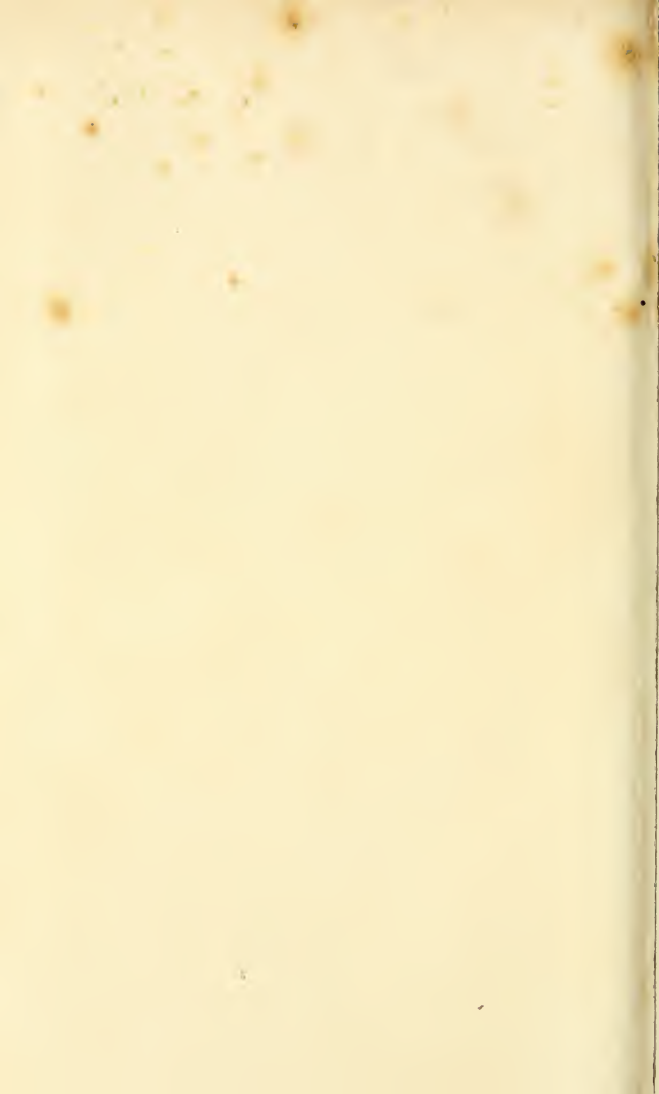
Make it your study and prayer to bring faith into daily and hourly exercise. You believe in a gracious, an all-seeing, and almighty God : act as in his sight. You believe in an atoning Saviour : look daily to him as your life, your all. You believe in eternal judgment : now live as one whose actions and thoughts must then be scrutinized ; live as you will wish to have done, when standing to receive the sentence of your Judge. You believe that there is a happy Heaven : pursue it with that earnestness which eternal life demands. You believe that there is a miserable prison of eternal punishment : watch and pray against sin, the source of misery, the cause of the creation of hell. You believe that your way to eternity is beset with snares :

watch and pray lest you enter into temptation. You believe that you are dark in your reason, and weak in your power : listen then with all humility to him, whose knowledge is as boundless as yours is confined. Receive implicitly whatever Jesus has revealed ; and let it be enough to engage your belief, that he has said it. You believe that you are weak ; let frequent daily prayer implore the guidance and strength of your God and Saviour, to attend you through the world, down to death, and up to glory. Thus live as a believer. And when a few more suns have risen and set ; when a few more days, and weeks, and months have rolled away ; when you have suffered a few more of the pains, and enjoyed a few more of the pleasures of life ; your days will be numbered, your time will be no longer, your farewell must be taken of earthly comfort, and your freedom from earthly pain will be complete. Then will you see what you now believe. Faith will then be changed to sight, and hope be lost in certainty, possession, and eternal joy.











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